

jected his slides onto my living room wall. For me he was the white knight who had arrived in my life just in the nick of time to set everything straight and save me from chaos. Poor Tom. How unfair projections are. No mortal man could possibly live up to that.

But there was something else I found fascinating about him: I had never been intimate with someone from his background—third-generation, midwestern, white-collar Irish-American . . . on both sides. He was never a Marxist or Maoist, as some critics liked to claim. One need only read the Port Huron Statement, SDS's founding document, which Tom co-authored, to see that his politics were always grounded solidly in democratic values.

His mother, Gene, was a sparrowlike woman who had been a librarian for twenty-five years, never missing a day's work. His father, Jack, was an accountant for the Chrysler Corporation. Both were natives of Wisconsin and during the Depression had moved to the Detroit suburb of Royal Oak, where for eight years Tom attended the Shrine of the Little Flower Church and parish school.

But things were far from picture perfect in Tom's childhood. Following World War II, his father began drinking heavily, and in time his parents divorced. Thereafter Gene devoted her life to Tom, never again remarrying or even seeing another man. Then, in the early sixties, Tom became a full-time activist in the civil rights movement, and his father, a conservative Republican, broke off all contact with him, his only child—for thirteen years! I had often pondered what kind of person my grandfather was to have refused to speak to my dad for six weeks because he was considering a career in acting—but thirteen years! Tom told me about this rupture with his dad in a matter-of-fact way, never in emotional terms. But I cannot fathom what an impact it must have had on him—growing up with a repressed, noncommunicative father who then cut off all relations and a mother who, though a fairly liberal Democrat, was frightened and confused by her child's activism and held a deep bitterness about life that I could never penetrate.

Perhaps this was why, like Vadim, Tom could cry easily about children, the war, animals, but couldn't show emotions in intimate areas like love, loss, and betrayal; he couldn't allow that degree of vulnerability. The sensitivity displayed in his slide show disguised Tom's lack of emotional availability. But I was so accustomed to the absence of emotionality in the men in my life that I thought Tom the most emotionally

ever problems we had in that area must be all my fault. (Of course, if Tom had possessed a real capacity for intimacy at that time, I probably would have fled in terror without knowing why. It's so much easier to stay with what's familiar.)

Others knew Tom differently. One day soon after we became lovers, a woman named Carol Kurtz arrived at my doorstep asking for Tom. I sensed she needed to be alone with him. I knew Carol a little; she and her husband were members of the Red Family collective. I told Tom she wanted to talk to him, but instead of asking her in, he stood just outside the front door for a few minutes, and when he came back in he was clearly angry. I went to say good-bye to Carol and found her sobbing. Carol wanted to repair the breach between them caused by his expulsion from the collective and maintain a friendship with Tom. He wanted no part of it. She said to me, "He has no heart, no emotions." I thought, She can't be referring to the Tom I know. Tom never spoke about what transpired between them that day, but I never forgot Carol's words, which so confused me.

Little by little I learned that after leaving the Red Family, Tom had migrated from Berkeley to Santa Monica, where he lived anonymously while writing his book about Native Americans and Vietnam. By the time he surfaced in my life that spring, he was sharing a small apartment with the brilliant, soft-spoken attorney Leonard Weinglass, who had represented Tom during the Chicago conspiracy trial. They lived on the ground floor of a house in Venice, a colorful coastal area just south of Santa Monica. In Tom, and in his circle, I felt I had at last found a haven from the storms of uncertainty buffeting me. I felt he would bring coherence, structure, and safety into my life . . . and in many ways he did just that. In some ways he didn't.

But if I thought the previous buffeting had been hard, nothing could compare with what was about to happen.

On May 8 President Nixon had ordered underwater explosive mines to be placed in the Haiphong harbor, something that had been rejected by previous administrations. Later that same month, a month after Tom and I had become lovers, reports began to come in from European scientists and diplomats that the dikes of the Red River Delta in North Vietnam were being targeted by U.S. planes. The Swedish ambassador to

in Hanoi that he had at first believed the bombing was accidental but now, having seen the dikes with his own eyes, he was convinced it was deliberate.

I might have missed the significance of these reports had Tom not shown me what the Pentagon Papers had to say on the subject: In 1966, assistant secretary of Defense John McNaughton, searching for some new means to bring Hanoi to its knees, had proposed destroying North Vietnam's system of locks and dams, which, he said, "if handled right, might . . . offer promise . . . such destruction does not kill or drown people. By shallow-flooding the rice, it leads after time to widespread starvation (more than a million?) unless food is provided—which we could offer to do 'at the conference table.'" President Johnson, to his credit, had not acted upon this option. Now, six years later, Richard Nixon appeared to have given orders to target the dikes—whether to actually destroy them or to demonstrate the threat of destruction, no one knew.

Tom explained that the Red River is North Vietnam's largest. Its delta is below sea level. Over centuries the Vietnamese people have constructed—by hand!—an intricate network of earthen dikes and dams to hold back the sea, a network 2,500 miles long! The stability of these dikes became especially critical as monsoon season approached and required an all-out effort to repair any damage from burrowing animals or from normal wear and tear. Now it was June, but this was no normal wear and tear they were facing. The Red River would begin to rise in July and August. Should there be flooding, the mining of the Haiphong harbor would prevent food from being imported. The bombing showed no signs of letting up, and there was little press coverage of the potential impending disaster. Something drastic had to be done.

The Nixon administration and its U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, George Herbert Walker Bush, would vehemently deny what was happening, but the following are excerpts from the April–May 1972 transcripts of conversations between President Nixon and top administration officials:

April 25, 1972

PRESIDENT NIXON: "... We've got to be thinking in terms of an all-out bombing attack [of North Vietnam]. . . . Now by all-out bombing attack, I am thinking about things that go far beyond. . . . I'm thinking of the dikes, I'm thinking of the railroad, I'm thinking, of course, the docks. . . ."

KISSINGER: "... I agree with you."

PRESIDENT NIXON: "... And I still think we ought to take the dikes out now. Will that drown people?"

KISSINGER: "About two hundred thousand people."

PRESIDENT NIXON: "... No, no, no. . . . I'd rather use the nuclear bomb. Have you got that, Henry?"

KISSINGER: "That, I think, would just be too much."

PRESIDENT NIXON: "The nuclear bomb, does that bother you? . . . I just want to think big, Henry, for chrissakes."

May 4, 1972

PRESIDENT NIXON TO KISSINGER, AL HAIG, JOHN CONNALLY: "... Vietnam: Here's those little cocksuckers right in there, here they are. [He thumps on his desk] Here we are. They're taking on the United States. Now, goddammit, we're gonna do it. We're going to cream them. . . ."

"I'll see that the United States does not lose. . . . South Vietnam may lose. But the United States *cannot* lose. Which means, basically, I have made the decision. Whatever happens to South Vietnam, we are going to cream North Vietnam. . . ."

"For once we've got to use the maximum power of this country . . . against this *shit-ass* little country: to win the war. We can't use the word 'win.' But others can."

May 4, 1972

JOHN B. CONNALLY: "... Bomb for seriousness, not just as a signal. Railroads, ports, power stations, communication lines . . . and don't worry about killing civilians. Go ahead and kill 'em. . . . People think you are [killing civilians] now. So go ahead and give 'em some."

RICHARD NIXON: "That's right."

H. R. HALDEMAN: "There's pictures on the news of dead bodies every night. . . . A dead body is a dead body. Nobody knows whose bodies they are or who killed them."

RICHARD NIXON: "Henry [Kissinger] is overreacting on that. . . . because they're going to charge us with it [killing civilians] anyway."

[Later in same conversation]

RICHARD NIXON: "We need to win the goddamned war . . . and . . . what that fella [?] said about taking out the goddamned dikes, all right, we'll take out the goddamned dikes. . . . If Henry's for that, I'm for it all the way."

H. R. HALDEMAN: "I don't know if he's for the dikes."

RICHARD NIXON: "No, I don't think he's for the dikes, but I am. I am for the Connally idea."

[Later in same conversation]

RICHARD NIXON: "I agree with Connally about civilians, too. I'm not going to worry about it."

So much for winding down the war. So much for our concern about civilian casualties and our "allies" in South Vietnam.

That May I received an invitation from the North Vietnamese in Paris to make the trip to Hanoi. Tom felt strongly that I should go. Perhaps it would take a different sort of celebrity to get people's attention. Heightened public attention—even if it took controversy to achieve it—was what was needed to confront the impending crisis with the dikes. I would take a camera and bring back photographic evidence (if such was to be found) of the bomb damage to the dikes we'd been hearing about.

I arranged the trip's logistics through the Vietnamese delegation at the Paris peace talks, bought myself a round-trip ticket, and stopped in New York. Since 1969 mail for the POWs had been brought in and out of North Vietnam every month by American visitors. This effort was coordinated by the Committee of Liaison with Families of Prisoners Detained in Vietnam. I picked up a packet of letters from families of POWs that I would deliver.

CHAPTER NINE

HANOI

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weakness of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.,
Riverside Church, New York City, 1967

Love thine enemies.
—MATTHEW 5:44

I WENT ALONE. I'm not sure why. It can't be that we couldn't afford a plane ticket for Tom. Obviously Tom didn't think it was necessary for someone to accompany me to Hanoi. "They invited you," he said recently when I put the question to him. "Besides," he added, "at the time, we weren't together publicly as a couple."

I didn't know how unusual it was for someone—especially a famous person, especially a woman—to go alone into a war zone. In spite of it, I do not regret that I went. My only regret about the trip was that I was photographed sitting in a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun site. What that image suggested had no relationship whatsoever to what I was doing or thinking or feeling at the time, as I hope this chapter will show.

Beginning in 1965, over two hundred American citizens had trav-

eled to North Vietnam, mostly in groups, to bring back eyewitness reports. They represented American peace and religious groups, Vietnam veterans, teachers, lawyers, and poets. Doctors and biologists from Harvard, Yale, and MIT had gone to assess the medical needs of the North Vietnamese. Tom had been one of the first to make the trip, in 1965, with historian Staughton Lynd and organizer Herbert Aptheker. He went again in 1967 and brought back the first three American POWs to be released.

All the travelers had returned with reports about extensive bombing of civilian targets, including churches, hospitals, and schools; reports that the morale of the North seemed undiminished, that the bombing was not having and would not have the desired effect of getting the North Vietnamese government to retreat at the negotiating table, and that the North Vietnamese were prepared to negotiate when the United States stopped bombing and withdrew its troops.

I am running full speed through Orly Airport in Paris. My flight from New York got in late and I am about to miss the plane to Moscow that will carry me to Vientiane, Laos, and on to Hanoi. As I round a corner, I slip on the polished floor and down I go. I know immediately that I have refractured the foot I broke the previous year. Bulimics have thin bones; I've had a lot of breaks. What to do? I have seconds to make up my mind: Should I use this as an excuse to turn around and go home, or should I keep going? For better or worse, I'm not the turnaround type. So I hobble to my plane, getting there just as the doors are about to close. I wrap some ice in a towel and strap it onto my foot, which the flight attendant kindly lets me elevate on the back of the passenger's headrest in front of me—the seat is empty. I wish Tom were here.

By the time we land in Moscow my foot is swollen and blue, and I know I must get it tended to. I have a four-hour layover till the next lap of the journey, so airport officials get me a taxi and instruct the driver to take me to the closest hospital on the outskirts of Moscow. After X-raying my foot, the doctors confirm it is a fracture, apply a plaster cast, give me a pair of crutches, and send me back to the airport.

What will my Vietnamese hosts think when they see me get off the plane with crutches and a cast? They don't need the burden of a disabled American descending on them—and how am I going to climb over the earthen dikes that I am coming to film?

I decide to remain on board during the layover in Vientiane, in part because of my foot and in part because I am concerned that an American spook has been sent to nab me en route.

From my FBI files: A confidential cable from the American embassy in Vientiane to National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger in Washington, the U.S. delegation at the Paris peace talks, the commander in chief of Pacific forces, and the U.S. embassy in Saigon said:

Actress Jane Fonda arrived in Hanoi July 8 via Aeroflot from Moscow.

Subject was not carried as passenger on Aeroflot manifesto deposited during Vientiane transit morning July 8 nor did she disembark to transit lounge.

We finally take off for Hanoi after what has felt like an interminable layover. The plane is only partly filled, and I see that I am the sole woman among a burly assortment of what appear to be Russians and Eastern Europeans, with a Frenchman or two thrown in.

Soon we are over Vietnam. I begin to think of the country as a woman, her back nestled against Cambodia and Laos, her pregnant belly protruding into the South China Sea, so small and vulnerable that any superpower would feel certain it could call her bluff in no time flat. What a thin little slip of a country she is, much like the small, thin-boned people who inhabit her.

The flight is supposed to be short, but as we approach Hanoi, I look out my window and see the black silhouettes of eight American Phantom jet fighters circling above the city. I stiffen. Something about them tells my body what they are about even before my mind knows. In the journal I intend to keep of my trip, I write that they look like hawks circling their prey. An abrupt voice over the loudspeaker announces that the planes are bombing Hanoi and that we will have to turn around and go at least partway back to Vientiane (or all the way if we start to run low on gas) until the bombers finish their mission. (I have subsequently read that U.S. bombers took advantage of North Vietnam's unwillingness to fire at them when civilian aircraft were in range.)

I watch the planes recede from sight, riveted. My country's planes—bombing a city where I am about to be received as a welcomed guest. I hate the killing of and by American soldiers. I know that the way to support them is to end the war and get them home; that the people of this

emerald country spread beneath me are fighting to defend their country from foreigners—and that we are now the foreigners.

I think of my childhood, when I would go with my mother to see Dad off at the air base in Burbank, California, during World War II. How beautiful the planes had looked all lined up under the camouflaged netting! How proud I had felt that they were there to protect us! Now our planes represent not protection from another mighty military power, but destruction of a peasant people who pose no threat to us.

We are flying into Hanoi. Has it been an hour? A day? As in a dream, time has lost its meaning. As we begin our descent to Gia Lam, the small, civilian airport, I see bomb craters dotting the surrounding landscape. A recent summer downpour has turned the craters into shimmering pink-and-blue pools reflecting the rose-tinted sky at dusk. Death and beauty joined.

It is awkward getting down the plane's steps, because I am juggling the crutches and a purse, a camera, and a packet of letters from the families of POWs. I look up to see five Vietnamese walking toward me carrying flowers. They are the welcoming committee of the Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the American People. The name sounds propagandistic to me, but the fullness of its meaning will soon be made clear in unusual, very human terms. As I'd anticipated, they look shocked and want to hand me the bouquet, but I can't hold it and the crutches at the same time. Standing on the farmac, they hold a quick conference in Vietnamese with numerous glances at my cast. I understand their concern: These are the people who will be responsible for my well-being over the next two weeks. Clearly my condition is worrisome. I wonder whether this is a group of seasoned cadres whose job it is to manipulate me.

Some sort of a decision is reached: Suddenly they are all smiles. I am led into a reception room inside the airport, where we all sit on upholstered chairs and I am offered tea, bottles of carbonated water (which tastes rusty), and hard candy. I notice that the airport is very dilapidated: Paint is chipping, water from a roof leak has left stains on the walls. It is breathtakingly hot and humid. I hand over the packet of letters, then try

to assure my hosts that my injury will not deter me from going into the countryside and photographing the dikes. I show them my small 8-millimeter film camera and my still camera and remind them that I was very clear in my pretrip letter that I am here primarily to photograph the damage to the dikes. Privately I am not certain how I will manage out in the countryside, especially if there is a bombing raid, as running for cover doesn't seem to be in the cards; but I say I don't want to change our plans, and everyone nods. Later I will discover that they tend to nod whether or not they agree with me. I suddenly feel very vulnerable.

In retrospect I wonder about my insistence at continuing despite the danger. Yes, I was numb with exhaustion and pain. But more to the point is my character: To turn away out of fear is just about unthinkable.

My main interpreter, Quoc, briefly goes over the schedule for my visit. I notice that the trip to an anti-aircraft installation is still on the agenda for the last day, despite my message from Los Angeles saying I was not interested in military installations. I tell them that I don't want to keep that visit on the agenda. Altering the plans appears to cause consternation. Decisions have been made. I am too tired to protest.

This is a lapse that I will live to regret.

I am relieved when Quoc suggests that they take me to my hotel. I am assured that I will soon get a good meal and that, after a night's sleep, I will be taken to a hospital to have my foot examined. (My head should have been examined as well!)

The hour-long drive into Hanoi is a shock. I was expecting desperation. Instead I see people, a lot of people, bustling about their business despite the fact that only an hour ago the city has been bombed. Battered old military jeeps and trucks pass us, covered with leafy camouflage. I see countless soldiers of both sexes in khaki uniforms, also with leaves on their helmets, and civilians, walking, riding, or pushing dilapidated bicycles through the mud and ruts of this much attacked highway. The civilians all wear conical straw hats, loose white tops, and black pajama-type pants, the traditional Vietnamese peasant attire. Many have rolled up their pajama pants to keep them out of the mud and the bicycle gears, exposing universally sinewy legs and black rubber sandals like Tom's. Here and there I can see piles of rubble, houses without roofs, and more bomb craters.

In speeches back home I have said how outrageous it is that we are pounding this backward country with our unprecedented modern tech-

nology. Now that I am here, seeing how primitive it really is, it all becomes even more reprehensible. Were it not for the insights that Tom's slide show has given me—can it have only been three months earlier?—I could not comprehend how they are resisting.

The Long Binh Bridge, which crossed the Red River, has been destroyed, but next to it is a floating bamboo pontoon bridge permitting an uninterrupted flow of people, military jeeps, and trucks filled with soldiers to move in and out of the city. I have heard about the Vietnamese's ability to put up a bamboo bridge, take it down, and hide it away, all in a matter of minutes. Because the pontoon is narrow, all the traffic going in one direction is allowed to pass; then the traffic going the other way can proceed. We move slowly, with frequent stops, and I can feel the bridge swaying. It is so crowded I fear it will collapse. I am also acutely aware that should the bombers return, we are sitting ducks.

Sitting in the car, I cannot speak. I am too filled with emotions—sorrow and guilt at what my government is doing, admiration at the way these people are getting on with their lives, and disbelief: *This is not a dream, I am actually here—alone*. The enormity of it is washing over me. I feel that my hosts understand what is happening to me, since they remain quiet as well. I just sit and look out the car window, the lovely bouquet of fresh flowers lying in my lap, in ironic contrast to the reality outside.

It is one thing to refuse, in the abstract, my government's definition of "enemy." But being here with soldiers and trucks passing just outside the car window, I realize it is less simple. I am not afraid—it's not that. It's being here on the ground with people whose mission is to defeat us. Though I understand that they are fighting to defend themselves and that we are the aggressors, the "they" are right here at eye level, and the "us" is me. Everything seems upside down like in *Alice in Wonderland*.

It is dusk as we enter Hanoi, a sprawling, former colonial city shaped by French architects, with wide, tree-lined boulevards, parks, and lakes. I am told that the targets of the eight planes I saw earlier were a cigarette factory, a hospital, and a brickyard at the height of their working hours, all in Hanoi's outlying area.

We enter the old, colonial Thong Nhat Hotel through a rickety revolving door. There are quite a few Europeans and two American journalists sitting about the high-ceilinged lobby. I have been given an enor-

mous room on an upper floor, with a ceiling fan and mosquito netting over the bed. Bed! My foot is throbbing terribly and I can't wait to lie down. A thermos of hot water, a can of tea, teapot, cups, candy, and individually folded pieces of thick brown toilet paper have been laid out for me, and I'm told there is plenty of hot water for a bath. I am too tired for a bath but grateful for the luxurious accommodations and relieved finally to be here.

Around midnight I am jolted from a deep sleep by shrill air raid sirens. A maid appears at my door carrying a helmet for me. She is there to escort me to the bomb shelter in the hotel's backyard. As I hobble down the back stairs and out into the darkened yard, I can see the hotel staff calmly going about their work. Later I am told that the maids double as militia and during alerts don their own helmets and go up onto the roof with rifles. I am led down a flight of stairs into a long, tunnel-like concrete bunker lined with benches. A dozen or so people are already there, all foreign visitors.

This is easier to take than seeing U.S. bombers from the air: John Sullivan, director of the American Friends Service Committee—the Quaker peace organization—is here. He doesn't recognize me—partly the cliché about seeing someone out of context (and this is about as out of context as it gets), but also because I don't look like me: I am without makeup, disheveled, and tired. I'm tempted to say, "I used to be Jane Fonda."

Sullivan asks when I arrived and why I've come. In his subsequent written report of the trip he will quote me as saying it was "vital that Americans speak out against this bombing because if they were silent, Nixon would ratchet up the damage as his peace plan was stripped of even the illusion of victory," that I didn't "believe that Nixon would accept a coalition government in Saigon," and that "Hanoi would never accept a Thieu government after American withdrawal." Not bad for someone who was still half-asleep and had a fractured foot, if I do say so!

There are two more air raids that night. Newly blasé, I stay in my bed for the third one.

Already up and outside the hotel at 5:30 in the morning, I am struck, as I was the previous evening, by the bustle of the place. I don't know if everyone seems to be hurrying because the bombing doesn't

usually start until 9:00 A.M. or if hurrying is their custom (of course, the bombing has *become* their custom). There are no cars to be seen—I'm told that no one owns a private car—but there is dense bicycle and foot traffic everywhere and a sense of purposefulness. Blanketing the scene is a mellifluous female voice being broadcast from loudspeakers mounted on street corners. Impossible to know what she is saying: the morning news? political propaganda? a story about Vietnamese heroes and heroines from the past? The voice, I will discover, goes on till nightfall, interrupted occasionally by a song. After a while it loses some of its charm—especially when I learn that mostly it is spouting political propaganda. I learn to ignore it.

It is just dawn as we drive through the city to the Vietnam-Soviet Friendship Hospital, where I am to have my foot examined. I can see camouflaged vehicles coming and going, their lights off. At the hospital, two male Vietnamese doctors who have been briefed about my arrival lay me on a table to take an X-ray of my foot—or at least they try to. No sooner have I lain down than the air raid sirens blare and I have to be helped into the hospital's bomb shelter, essentially identical to the one at the hotel, only larger and now filling rapidly with doctors and those patients who can be moved.

I sense no panic; they seem to have grown accustomed to this ritual interruption of their daily lives. This is my first time sharing a bomb shelter with Vietnamese, and it makes the experience all the more surreal. I feel unspeakably guilty to be taking up space and the attention of two doctors while my country is attacking theirs. My interpreter for the day, Madame Chi, tells them I am American and this stirs up a lot of excitement. I search their eyes for some sign of hostility. There is none. Those unhostile eyes will stay with me long after the war ends.

The raid is over, and we return to the X-ray machine—only to be interrupted a second time by the sirens. Perhaps an hour goes by before the doctors are finally able to get the X-ray of my foot. Sure enough, there is a slight fracture across the arch. As they are removing the Soviet-made cast, they begin to laugh and chatter to each other. Madame Chi, who has remained by my side throughout, tells me they are laughing at the poor job the Soviets have done: They had neglected to put gauze between my skin and the plaster, and because it was mixed improperly, the plaster

hasn't hardened on the inside . . . thank God! Had it hardened, my skin would have come off with the cast.

The doctors explain that they are going to strap a poultice made from chrysanthemum roots onto my foot and ankle. They tell me that it is so full of healing and strengthening elements that pregnant women in Vietnam drink tea brewed from the same roots. "Because of the war," one doctor says, "we have to rely on whatever we have, simple things, to meet our medical needs." (I wonder if Adelle Davis knows about this.)

The stuff is truly foul smelling, but the doctors tell me they are certain that within days my swelling will go away and the fracture will mend. Anything that smells this bad is bound to work! The irony of this whole episode is not lost on me: Here is this besieged, agrarian country accused by the United States of being a Soviet pawn when in mind, spirit, and medicine, at least, its people seem remarkably independent and to be "making do" just fine.

Driving through Hanoi, I notice that the streets are swept clean; I see no litter anywhere, no signs of poverty, no beggars, no homeless people—and few children. Most children, Madame Chi tells me, have long ago been evacuated to the countryside, where life continues. "We have moved our schools, the university, hospitals, and factories out of the city and rebuilt them in the countryside, sometimes underground and in caves." Flexibility and adaptability must be skills they honed during their war against the French colonialists—or maybe against the Japanese, or the Chinese, or the Mongols.

We attract a good deal of attention as we drive. I assume this is because there are so few cars to be seen, and ours signals the presence of a VIP. People wave and a few teenage boys run alongside, peering through the window to try to get a look at the passengers inside. When they see me, they shout something at the driver. Madame Chi tells me they are asking where I am from—I am I Russian? The driver shouts, "She's an American," and they actually cheer!

"Why are they happy to see an American?" I ask Madame Chi, incredulous.

"You won't find any 'Yankee Go Home' slogans here," she replies. "Our people aren't anti-American. When we see a bomb crater we say 'Nixon's' or 'Johnson's,' not 'America's.'"

MY LIFE SO FAR

300

I find this incomprehensible. I wish Tom were here so we could ponder it together.

I am visiting the nine-hundred-bed Bach Mai Hospital, the largest in North Vietnam. Although it has been bombed on numerous occasions over the years, the hospital has continued to function. Some of the surgeons, still dressed in their blue hospital garb and masks, have come out to speak with me. I ask them how they continue their work. They describe how during bombing raids they carry patients into the shelter, where an operating room has been built.

It has been only two days, but I no longer need crutches and the swelling in my foot has almost disappeared. When I get home maybe I'll market chrysanthemum root for its healing properties!

I visit the Committee for Denunciation of U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam, run by Colonel Ha Van Lau, who will later be named Vietnamese ambassador to the United Nations. Colonel Lau guides me through the exhibit. There are the twelve-thousand-pound daisy cutters, the guava bombs, pineapple bombs, the Willie Peters, cluster bombs, pellet bombs—weaponry I had heard described by veterans at the Winter Soldier investigation. Sitting on the floor like a piece of metal sculpture is the casing of a three-thousand-pound "mother" bomb, the bearer of the little bomblets that are so devastating to humans because they float down and explode later. The smaller weapons are displayed on shelves inside glass cases with photographs next to them, showing the effects of the particular weapon on a human being or, in the case of the defoliants, an entire forest.

This is the true face of Vietnamization that President Nixon hopes Americans won't find out about: American soldiers may be coming home from war, but the war is escalating and more Vietnamese are dying. Does he hope we've grown immune to the suffering of others? I resolve that no matter what, I will keep my heart open and try to communicate what I am seeing to other Americans back home.

Colonel Lau explains that since Nixon became president, the weapons have become even more sophisticated and damaging. "Before now," he says, "we were able surgically to remove the pellets. But now



Walking gingerly over ruins in Vietnam.
(© G. Guillaume/Magnum Photos)

HANOI

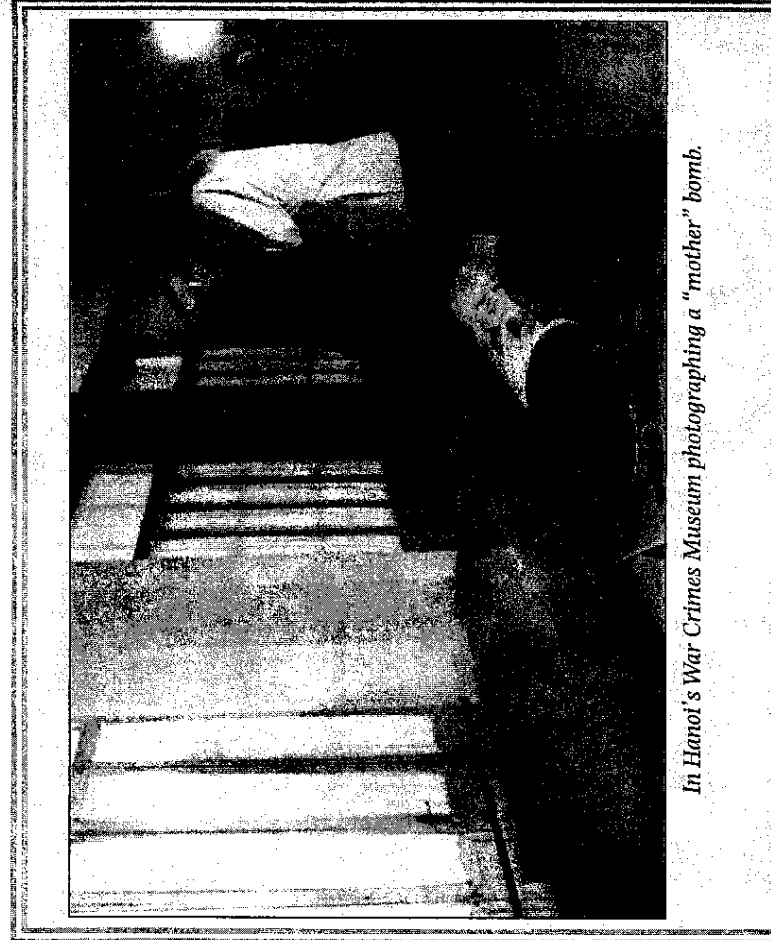
303

they have been made in such a way that they can't be removed without doing even more damage. Some of them now expand once inside the flesh." And he points to another X-ray. I am grateful for the colonel's air of detachment. Had he expressed anger, I would have disintegrated.

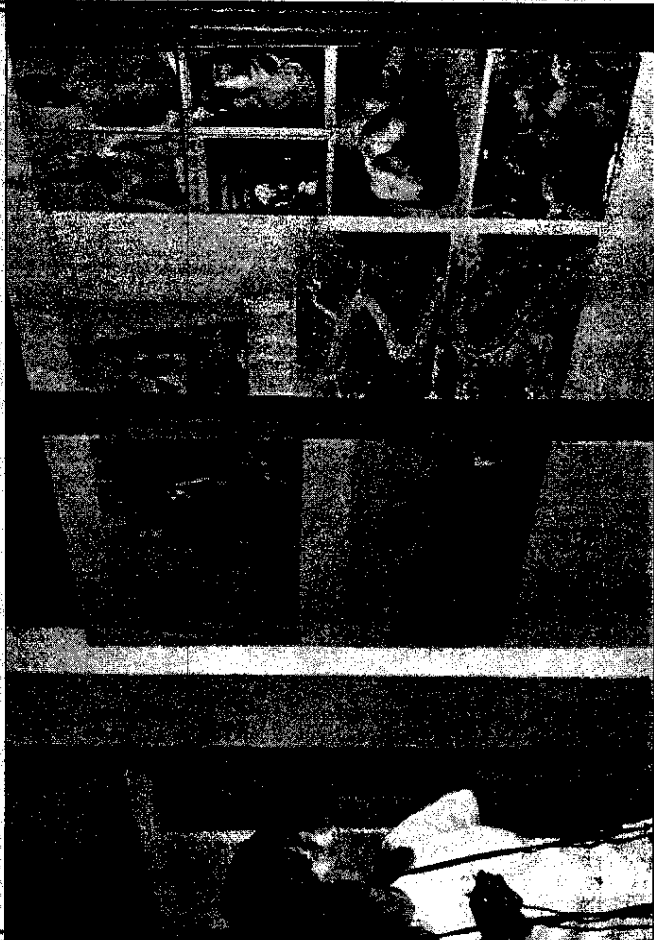
From the war crimes exhibit, I am taken to the Viet Duc Hospital. There I talk with Dr. Ton That Tung, who has begun research linking the U.S. chemical defoliant Agent Orange to birth defects in babies born to women in sprayed areas of South Vietnam.

"We are seeing more and more of these birth defects," he tells me. Then, as if reading my mind, he adds, "Yes, I fear you will soon be seeing these things among your own soldiers."

I know what I must do.



In Hanoi's War Crimes Museum photographing a "mother" bomb.



Looking at photographic evidence of the effects of U.S. antipersonnel weapons and defoliation spraying.

CHAPTER TEN

BAMBOO

BAMBOO

305

witness, and while I have not planned this, I feel it as a moral imperative. I do not stop to consider that this will have consequences for me later—especially since I know that other American travelers to Hanoi have spoken on Radio Hanoi. Some will later accuse me of treason for urging soldiers to desert—something I do not do.

The first broadcast is done live. Others will be recorded over the next week.* Aside from a few notes I have scribbled to myself, I speak extemporaneously, from my heart, about what I have witnessed and how it made me feel. (A CIA contract employee, Edward Hunter, was brought before the House Committee on Internal Security as an authority on Communist brainwashing techniques. He testified that my broadcasts were “so concise and professional a job” that he “most strongly doubt[ed] that [I] wrote them [myself. I] must have been working with the enemy.” Committee chair Richard Ichord agreed. He was quoted as saying I “used a lot of military terms that wouldn’t be within [my] knowledge.” Obviously they were unaware of the time I had spent with soldiers.)

As I talk I see in my mind the faces of the air force pilots I have met. I feel as if I am talking to men I know and, eternal optimist that I am, I hope that if they can see what I am seeing, they will feel as I do.

This is a transcript of a typical broadcast:

Eighty percent of the American people, according to a recent poll, have stopped believing in the war and think we should get out, think we should bring all of you [soldiers] home. The people back home are crying for you.

*For transcripts of my broadcasts in Hanoi, see U.S. Congress House Committee on Internal Security, *Travel to Hostile Areas*, HR 16742. Actually, there are two types of transcripts in HR 16742. The first (and most common) kind comes directly from my radio broadcasts. The CIA transcribers copied down what they heard me say in English. Nothing was translated. Some examples of these would be on pages 7645, 7646, etc. But HR 16742 has another kind of transcript that can be misleading. An example of these would be on page 7653 (top of the page) where the transcript reads: “Sister Fonda indignantly said, [first two sentences in English, fading into Vietnamese translation—recording] Melvin Laird the other day said that bombing of dikes may be taking place . . .” etc. In these transcripts, what I said was first translated into Vietnamese, broadcast in Vietnamese by a Vietnamese journalist, picked up by CIA listeners and translated back into English. Anything translated twice like that can end up far from the original and shouldn’t be relied on.

Americans looked at photographs of the North and saw a poor country where life seemed drab and regimented and assumed that the regime was hated. There was hatred of the regime and opposition, but nothing similar to what existed in the South. The majority of the Northern population was loyal to its government. The photographs held a clue. . . . The clue was the absence of barbed wire. . . . The Vietnamese Communists were not afraid of their people.

—NEIL SHEEHAN,
A Bright Shining Lie

AS WE STEP from the Viet Duc Hospital into the sunlight, I have made up my mind.

“I want to speak on your radio,” I say to my hosts. “I want to try to tell U.S. pilots what I am seeing here on the ground.”

I am used to talking with soldiers, and my work with VVAW and the FTA tour has given me some understanding of their realities. I know that a growing number of airmen have turned against the war, and I remember hearing that the maps they were given of their targets had no Vietnamese names on them—only numbers, remote, impersonal. They have never been in Vietnam, have never seen the faces of their victims. I feel I must try to make what I am seeing as personal an experience for them as it is for the soldiers on the ground in South Vietnam. I have come to bear

Tonight when you are alone, ask yourselves: What are you doing? Accept no ready answers fed to you by rote from basic training on up, but as men, as human beings, can you justify what you are doing? Do you know why you are flying these missions, collecting extra combat pay on Sunday?

The people beneath your planes have done us no harm. They want to live in peace. They want to rebuild their country. . . . Did you know that the antipersonnel bombs that are thrown from some of your planes were outlawed by the Hague Convention of 1907, of which the United States was a signatory? I think that if you knew what these bombs were doing, you would get very angry at the men who invented them. They cannot destroy bridges or factories. They cannot pierce steel or cement. Their only target is unprotected human flesh. The pellets now contain rough-edged plastic pellets, and your bosses, whose minds think in terms of statistics, not human lives, are proud of this new perfection. The plastic pellets don't show up on X rays and cannot be removed. The hospitals here are filled with babies and women and old people who will live for the rest of their lives in agony with these pellets embedded in them.

Can we fight this kind of war and continue to call ourselves Americans? Are these people so different from our own children, our mothers, or grandmothers? I don't think so, except that perhaps they have a surer sense of why they are living and what they are willing to die for.

I know that if you saw and if you knew the Vietnamese under peaceful conditions, you would hate the men who are sending you on bombing missions. I believe that in this age of remote-controlled push-button war, we must all try very, very hard to remain human beings.

A few days later I am driven south of Hanoi. Following us in a separate car is French filmmaker Gérard Guillaume and a small crew. He is in Hanoi to make a documentary and has decided to film some of my visit as well. Since my goal is to bear witness and get word out as broadly as possible, I welcome his being there.

All that is left of the city of Phu Ly, formerly a thriving industrial center, is the occasional frame of a building, a doorway, the steeple of a

church lying on its side. The city has been flattened into rubble. I am seeing what our makers of war assume Americans will never see.

We are driving back to Hanoi through the township of Duc Giang when air raid sirens let us know we have to take shelter. We tumble from the car and hurry to a half-buried A-frame shelter that is filling up with local Vietnamese. The film crew stumbles in right behind us. Suddenly the roar of Vietnamese antiaircraft guns explodes all around us, drowning out the sound of the American planes. It is a sound beyond sound. Do GIs hear this noise from their own guns? How do they stand it? I can't fathom how anyone could ever grow accustomed to this devastation of sound. But still, except for their curiosity about who I am, the people in the shelter appear calm. Again someone asks if I am Russian, and when Quoc tells them I am an American actress they get very excited and seem inordinately pleased. Why? Why don't they shout at me? I want to shout at them, "Don't you understand it is my country that is bombing you!" Suddenly I feel claustrophobic, wanting to be out of there, to see firsthand what is going on, to film the planes that are bombing. Before Quoc can stop me, I grab my camera and bolt from the shelter.

(Thirty years later, over lunch in California, Quoc will remind me that he had pleaded with me to come back inside but that I refused. Poor Quoc. I should have obeyed him. He was, after all, the one responsible for my safety.)

The raid ends and a sudden, deafening silence descends. It all happened so fast. The planes are gone, none were hit, and at least in the immediate vicinity, I can see no signs of damage. Quoc takes me to a group of soldiers who are operating the closest gun installation. I am surprised to see that they are young women and that one of them is pregnant. Pregnant and fighting. I think that if she can have hope, so can I. Right then I determine to have a baby with Tom, as a testament to our country's future.

I have found that the few clothes I brought—a pair of blue jeans, khaki slacks—are too hot for the days when I am mostly outdoors, so Madame Chi takes me to a small shop near the hotel where I purchase a pair of loose black pants and rubber sandals.

I travel to visit schools in outlying rural areas. When I ask if the war has created obstacles to the children's schooling, I am told that on the contrary, they have succeeded in gaining widespread literacy in the north. For a people who have gone directly from colonialism (which had left all but the privileged few illiterate) into war, it is an astonishing commitment to education.

I am taken to the Hanoi film studio, where I meet with a director and watch the most famous Vietnamese actor, Tra Giang, perform a scene in a film about a war heroine. I am surprised that they are continuing to make films despite the bombings. Tra Giang is from South Vietnam and about my age, with deep, sad eyes and an exquisite beauty. She is also pregnant. I will not forget her face.

Nguyen Dinh Thi is a well-known writer in Vietnam, and as he speaks fluent French, we can converse in the hotel gardens without a translator. As it happens, he is also very handsome, a Vietnamese cross between historian Howard Zinn and my dad: a long, lanky drink of water with expressive hands and black hair that flops over his forehead the way Dad's did in *Young Mr. Lincoln*. He is my favorite person to talk with, not only because of how he looks, but because of the way he has of capturing the essence of his country's struggle in brief metaphors, which he laughingly delivers like a gift on a tray, enjoying them as much as his listener does. He tells me, "We Vietnamese, because of our unique circumstances, have developed a deep sense of patience." He looks hard at me, making sure the words sink in, before continuing. "In our mountains here in the north there are huge limestone caves. We know these caves were not made by supernatural giants. No, they were made by little drops of water." And his grin stretches from ear to ear: It is the long-term, cumulative effects of seemingly weak things that achieve the impossible.

It is 3:00 in the morning as we leave the hotel in a camouflaged car to drive to Nam Sach forty miles east of Hanoi. We travel at night because of the danger of strafing by U.S. planes. Yesterday twenty foreign corre-

spondents who had come to examine the damage done to the dikes three days earlier were witness to a second attack. Twelve Phantom jets and A-7s dove at the dike the journalists were standing on and released several bombs and rockets. The reporter from Agence France-Press wrote on July 11 that they "all felt the attack was clearly against the dike system." This is what the United States is denying. This is what I have come to document.

The sky is beginning to lighten as we enter the province. Many people are already in the fields working. I am told they do a lot of work at night, when there is less danger of bombing. The whole area is protected from flooding by a complicated system of crisscrossing dikes.

The filmmakers are with us again. We walk through the mud on the narrow paths that run between rice paddies. It is impossible to keep my poulitce out of the mud, but at least I am walking and no longer need crutches. The sun is high overhead; sweat is running down my body. A flock of what appear to be starlings turns on a dime above us. Ahead I see my first dike, rising gradually eight or ten meters above the fields and built entirely of earth. Some men and women on bicycles and a few water buffalo pulling carts are moving along the top. Do they feel the heavy heat as I do or are they immune to it? On the other side is the Thai Binh River.

The particular spot that has been attacked for the second time just the previous morning is the most strategic, for here the dike must hold back the waters of six converging rivers. These rivers will be raging down the mountains in about two weeks. I am told that Nam Sach has been attacked by U.S. planes eight times since May 10 and the dikes have been hit four times. Although the planes are expected back, there are people all around, knee- and elbow-deep in mud, planting their rice and carrying huge baskets of earth to repair the dikes.

One of the committee members shouts to the people that I am an American actor, and this is greeted with smiles and waves. *Why? Why* don't they scream and shake their fists at me? That's what I would do in their place. Their lack of hostility seems passive and I feel the urge to grab their necks and shake some sense into them. *Get angry, dammit!*

As I stand on the dike, I look in all directions. I see no visible military targets, no industry, no communication lines—just rice fields. Then I suddenly see the bomb craters on both sides of the dike—gaping holes, some ten meters across and eight meters deep. The crater bottoms, I am told,

are two meters below sea level. The crater that had severed the dike is almost filled in again, but the main worry are the bombs that have fallen on the sides of the dike. They cause earthquakes that shatter the dike's foundation and make deep cracks that zigzag up the sides. Antipersonnel bombs have also been used; they enter the dike on an angle, lodging underneath and exploding later. This damage does not show up on aerial reconnaissance photographs. I am told that if these cracks aren't repaired in time, the pressure from the water—which will soon reach six or seven meters above the level of the fields—will cause the weakened dikes to give way and endanger the entire eastern region of the Red River Delta.

I am taken to another major dike in Nam Sach on the Kinh Tay River that was completely severed a few days before. Repair work is dangerous because of unexploded bombs. People in the province are preparing for the worst. I'm told everyone has a boat, that the top floors and roofs of homes have been reinforced, and that research is being done on crops that grow underwater.

A sulphur butterfly is resting on the lip of a bomb crater. Little things.

When I get back to Hanoi I make a radio broadcast about what I saw:

Yesterday morning I went to the district of Nam Sach to see the damage that has been done to the dikes in that district. . . . Without these dikes fifteen million people's lives would be endangered and [people] would die by drowning and by starvation. . . . I beg you to consider what you are doing. In the area where I went yesterday it was easy to see that there are no military targets, there is no important highway, there is no communication network, there is no heavy industry. These are peasants. They grow rice and they rear pigs. . . . They are similar to the farmers in the Midwest many years ago in the United States. Perhaps your grandmothers and grandfathers would not be so different from these peasants. . . . Please think what you are doing. Are these people your enemy? What will you say to your children years from now who may ask you why you fought the war? What words will you be able to say to them?

I am driven south to the village of Nam Dinh, which had fifty bombs dropped on it on June 18, a raid that destroyed about 60 percent of the

hamlet. People are hard at work rebuilding their homes, but Quoc says that the area is bombed almost daily. The Cuban ambassador in Hanoi told me the other day that a dozen or more Cubans, accustomed to working in the fields with the Vietnamese, collapsed after three hours of packing the earth into a dike. Maybe they should have drunk some chrysanthemum-root tea.

We are driving back to Hanoi down a tree-lined country road, past rice fields and hamlets. The driver suddenly stops the car and speaks urgently to Quoc in Vietnamese. "Quick," Quoc says, "there's a raid coming!" I hear nothing, but then my ears haven't been trained as theirs have in endless war.

Quoc makes me get out of the car and tells me to immediately get down into one of the "manholes" that line the road. These holes are everywhere in North Vietnam, dug into the sides of roads every fifty feet or so, each big enough for one person. In the cities, they are made of concrete and have concrete lids; in the countryside they are simply holes in the ground and the lids are made with thickly woven straw to protect people from the dreaded fragmentation pellets.

I am not yet able to run fast but am doing my best when suddenly I am grabbed from behind by a young Vietnamese girl with some books wrapped in a rubber belt slung over her shoulder. She pulls me down the road after her and motions for me to get into a hole directly in front of a thatched-roof house. No sooner have I climbed in than she wedges herself in with me, quickly covering us with the straw lid. This manhole is meant for one (small) Vietnamese body. But here we are, she and I, our bodies crushed together. One of her arms is around my waist; my hands are around her shoulders, my elbows pinned to my sides. Within seconds the ground begins vibrating with the noise of the bomber overhead, then *thud*, and another *thud*, and severe tremors that I assume come from bombs landing. It seems close, though it's hard to be certain. Then silence. The girl's cheek is pressed against mine. I can feel her eyelashes and her warm breath. *This cannot be happening. I am not jammed in a hole with a Vietnamese girl who has helped me escape American bombs. I know I am going to wake up and this will have been a dream.*

Instead I hear Quoc shouting to me that it is safe to come out (there are no sirens in the countryside). Then I feel the sun, warm on my head,

as the girl moves the lid aside and climbs out. I see her little pile of schoolbooks with the black rubber belt around it sitting by the edge of the hole where she'd dropped it. Quoc helps me out. In the far distance I see plumes of smoke that tell me the bombs have not dropped as close to us as I thought.

I begin to cry, saying over and over to the girl, "I'm sorry, oh, I am so sorry, I'm so sorry." She stops me and begins speaking to me in Vietnamese, not angry, very calm. Quoc translates: "You shouldn't cry for us. We know why we are fighting. The sadness should be for your country, your soldiers. They don't know why they are fighting us." I stare at her. She looks back, right into my eyes. Solid. Certain.

I have thought about this experience many times over the last thirty years. Out of the blue some schoolgirl gives me this foxhole analysis about the war being our problem, not theirs? Unbelievable as it may seem, it really happened—and it could not have been staged. There was no way to know that our car would have to stop when it did because of the air raid, no way to have planted that girl right then.

As we drive back to Hanoi, I am wondering if Vietnam isn't some petri dish where God is developing a new, more evolved species of being. I am, as Daniel Berrigan once said about himself and all resisters, afflicted beyond remedy with idealism and glad of it. But I will soon discover that the extraordinary personal experiences I am encountering have nothing to do with divine intervention.

It is one of my last days here. I have been invited to a special performance by the Hanoi Drama Troupe of Arthur Miller's play *All My Sons*. Apparently they want me, an American actor, to critique the production. The play tells the story of an American factory owner (referred to as the "Capitalist") during World War II whose plant manufactures parts for bombers. He discovers that the parts are faulty and that there is a risk that planes will crash as a result, but he says nothing for fear of losing his lucrative government contract. He pays a price for this, however, when one of his sons, a pilot, is killed in a plane crash caused by mechanical failure. His other son, who knows the truth, condemns his father for the silence and greed that caused his brother's death.

I am told that the Hanoi Drama Troupe has been touring this play to villages that have been recently bombed. I am perplexed: Arthur Miller? In bombed Vietnamese villages?

The play is performed on a platform outside. I cannot assess the performance, nor am I interested in doing so. It is the *fact* of the performance, not its quality, that matters. Sitting next to me, the director leans over and asks, "Is that how the Capitalist is supposed to look? We don't know."

The actor playing the factory owner is wearing brown-and-white lace-up saddle shoes, yellow pants, and a bow tie . . . polka dot, if I remember correctly. "Yes," I say, "it's perfect." (Actually I do know a wealthy architect who dresses like that.)

The play ends and we all have our picture taken together. Then I ask the director why the troupe has chosen to take this particular play on tour. Here is his answer:

This play shows that there are bad Americans and good Americans. We must help our people distinguish between the two. We are a small country. We cannot afford to let our people hate the American people. One day the war will be over and we must be friends.

Again I am speechless. What is there to say in response to this most beautiful and utterly sophisticated answer? All I can do is put my arms around him. I have moved from the hallways of awe into its mansions. I finally understand why people have reacted to me the way they have and why all the Americans who have come back from Vietnam recount the same experiences of friendliness. This is no accident and this is not a race of superbeings. The development of their attitudes and worldview has taken a deliberate, strategic, and Herculean effort on the part of the North Vietnamese (Communist) government. This play is one example.

All My Sons is a play about betrayal, a father betraying his son. For me the war is a betrayal; the U.S. government has betrayed its people, its own sons. The Vietnamese are using the play to help their people forgive our government. Why is this harder for me to do?

It dawns on me that war is easy. Peace is harder. This sophisticated striving to build bridges is harder.

I am a novice. This is the first time I have ever been in a revolutionary situation. I don't yet know that, historically, revolutionaries are poetic during revolution and that when it's over, when bureaucracy sets in, things can get grim. But right now, here in Hanoi, I am certainly not looking ahead to protect my flank from whatever is to come once the war ends. All I know is what I am experiencing.

This does not mean I want my country to "lose" the war. Nor does it mean I want us to be killed. I just want us *out*.

Fast-forward to 2002. I am with Quoc again, this time in Little Saigon, an area in Orange County, California, where many Vietnamese have settled. He is elderly now, like me, but his eyes are still warm and his face, though rounder, is still pixieish. He is leading a delegation of young people who are visiting the States from Hanoi. Together with John McAuliff, an old friend from the war days, we talk over lunch.

"The young girl who took me into the manhole with her," I say. "How could she have been so . . . sophisticated . . . especially under those terrifying circumstances?"

"The girl was not so unusual," Quoc replies. "Many of our young people had this understanding. It just happened that she was the one who brought you this message that particular day. Our young people knew a lot about your country. They read Mark Twain and Hemingway and Jack London."

Back to Hanoi: This is the day when I am scheduled to meet seven American POWs, something many American visitors before me have done. The men are driven from their camp, the Zoo, in a bus with blacked-out windows to the headquarters of the army film studio on the periphery of Hanoi, where the meeting is to take place. The French crew is also here to film the very beginning of the meeting, then they are ushered out. (I will show this footage at my press conference in Paris.) The POWs sit in a row, dressed in striped prison pajamas, and I sit facing them. In addition to the film crew there are several Vietnamese men present—guards, no doubt. The POWs appear to be healthy and fit. One of them has been a prisoner since 1967, one has been there since 1971, and the others were shot down this year (1972). All of them have called publicly for an end to the war and signed a powerful antiwar letter that they sent out with a previous American delegation to Hanoi.

I tell them the obvious: that I am against the war and that I decided to make the trip because of the reports of bomb damage to the dikes. They already know all of this because unbeknownst to me some of my radio broadcasts have been piped into their rooms over wall-mounted ra-

dios. A few of them tell me they, too, are against the war and want Nixon to be defeated in the upcoming elections. They express their fear that if he is reelected, the war will go on and on (they are right, it will) and that bombs might land on their prison. I have heard this fear before, from former POW George Smith and from POW families who have received letters. I am asked to convey their hopes that their families will vote for George McGovern.

I ask them if they feel they have been brainwashed or tortured, and they laugh, indicating it was not a part of their experiences. I do not mean to imply that the atmosphere is relaxed. It isn't. It is self-conscious and awkward for all the obvious reasons. Besides, there is at least one guard present throughout. A few describe things that demonstrate to me how much they have changed since being captured. One man tells me that he read a book by the American Friends Service Committee and it helped him realize how much of his humanity had been lost during his sixteen years of military service. Another, marine lieutenant colonel Edison Miller, tells me that he too has done a lot of reading in prison and is writing a book about Vietnamese history.

A large, impressive man sitting in the middle seat, navy captain David Hoffman, proudly raises his arm up and down over his head and says, "Please, when you go back, let my wife know that my arm has healed." He tells me that the arm had been broken when he was ejected from his plane. I assure him I will let his wife know (and I do, as soon as I get back).

After twenty minutes or so, the seven are escorted out of the room. Though they seem genuine, I realize that the men could have been lying to protect themselves, but I certainly see no signs in any of the seven that they have been tortured, at least not recently.

It is my last full day in North Vietnam. In spite of having made it clear to my hosts that I was not interested in visiting a military installation, I am going—and today is the day.

It is not unusual for Americans who visit North Vietnam to be taken to see Vietnamese military installations, and when they do they are always required to wear a helmet like the kind I have been given to wear during the air raids. I am driven to the site of the antiaircraft installation, somewhere on the outskirts of the city. There is a group of about a

dozen young Vietnamese soldiers in uniform who greet me. There is also a horde of photographers and journalists—many more than I have seen all in one place in Hanoi. (I later learn some of them were Japanese.)

This should have been a red flag.

Quoc isn't with me today, but another translator tells me that the soldiers want to sing me a song. He stands close and recites the words in English as the soldiers sing. It is a song about the day "Uncle Ho" declared their country's independence in Hanoi's Ba Dinh Square. I hear these words: "All men are created equal. They are given certain rights; among these are life, liberty, and happiness." I begin to cry and clap. *These young men should not be our enemy. They celebrate the same words Americans do.* The song ends with a refrain about the soldiers vowing to keep the "blue skies above Ba Dinh" free from bombers.

The soldiers ask me to sing for them in return. I am prepared for just such a moment. Before leaving the United States, I had memorized a song called "Day Ma Di," written by students in South Vietnam who are against the war. I launch into it *con gusto*, feeling ridiculous but I don't care. Vietnamese is a difficult language for a foreigner to speak and I know I am slaughtering it, but everyone seems delighted that I am making the attempt. Everyone laughs and claps, including me. I am overcome on this, my last day.

What happens next is something I have turned over and over in my mind countless times since. Here is my best, honest recollection of what took place.

Someone (I don't remember who) leads me toward the gun, and I sit down, still laughing, still applauding. It all has nothing to do with where I am sitting. I hardly even think about where I am sitting. The cameras flash.

I get up, and as I start to walk back to the car with the translator, the implication of what has just happened hits me. *Oh my God. It's going to look like I was trying to shoot down U.S. planes!* I plead with him, "You have to be sure those photographs are not published. Please, you can't let them be published." I am assured it will be taken care of. I don't know what else to do.

It is possible that the Vietnamese had it all planned.

I will never know. If they did, can I really blame them? The buck stops here. If I was used, I allowed it to happen. It was my mistake, and I have paid and continue to pay a heavy price for it. A traveling compan-



Applauding soldiers who had sung for me
at the antiaircraft gun outside Hanoi.

(Tony Korody/Time & Life
Pictures/Getty Images)



I am standing next to the antiaircraft gun, singing a Vietnamese song
back to the soldiers right before I sit in the gun's seat.

(AP/Wide World Photos)

ion, someone with a cooler head, would have kept me from taking that terrible seat. I would have known two minutes *before* sitting down what I didn't realize until two minutes *afterward*. That two-minute lapse of sanity will haunt me until I die. But the gun was inactive, there were no planes overhead—I simply wasn't *thinking* about what I was doing, only about what I was *feeling*—innocent of what the photo implies. Yet the photo exists, delivering its message, regardless of what I was really doing or feeling.

I realize that it is not just a U.S. citizen laughing and clapping on a Vietnamese antiaircraft gun: I am Henry Fonda's privileged daughter who appears to be thumbing my nose at the country that has provided me these privileges. More than that, I am a woman, which makes my sitting there even more of a betrayal. A gender betrayal. *And* I am a woman who is seen as Barbarella, a character existing on some subliminal level as an embodiment of men's fantasies; Barbarella has become their enemy. I have spent the last two years working with GIs and Vietnam veterans and have spoken before hundreds of thousands of antiwar protesters, telling them that our men in uniform *aren't* the enemy. I went to support them at their bases and overseas, and will, in years ahead, make *Coming Home* so that Americans can understand how the wounded were treated in VA hospitals. Now by mistake I appear in a photograph to be their enemy. I carry this heavy in my heart. I always will.

The next day, departure day. Quoc says to me, "I think you need to prepare yourself. There are some U.S. congressmen who are asking that you be put on trial for treason." It is my broadcasts over Radio Hanoi that have triggered the charges. He shows me the transcripts of Reuters news reports. The photo on the antiaircraft gun isn't even the issue. It hasn't yet appeared.

I do not know if what I have seen is a true reflection of Vietnam's reality. I know that there is selfishness, bitterness, pettiness, and violence in that small nation, as in all nations. I can understand and sympathize with the very different perceptions that our soldiers and POWs bring back with them. I know that best feet were put forward for my benefit (though that still doesn't explain that schoolgirl, the Arthur Miller play, and the eyes of the peasants in bomb shelters even after learning I was American).

But I have seen the signposts; I have gained a new understanding of what strength is. Bamboo is the metaphor. Bamboo is deceptive. It is thin and willowy, it appears weak alongside the sturdy oak. But ultimately it is bamboo, with its flexibility, that is the stronger. For the Vietnamese, the symbol of strength is the image of many bamboo poles tied together. Bamboo holds a forgiving, flexible, softer energy that can exist in men and women. Vietnam is bamboo.

I am softening. Can it have been only two weeks?

In a screening room in Paris on July 25, I showed the forty-minute film to the international press. It had been roughly edited in Hanoi by Gérard Guillaume. My central purpose for making this controversial trip to Hanoi was to bring back documented evidence that the dikes I visited had been bombed, a charge the U.S. government was vehemently denying.

It seemed that every news service in the world was in attendance. Simone Signoret was there as well—my unique support system. The conference was hosted by the well-known French photographer Roger Pic. I do not recall if I carried the film out of Vietnam myself or if Guillaume had it shipped from Hanoi, but unfortunately, somewhere between Hanoi and Paris the sound track was erased, so I had to show it without sound.

I explained carefully how the antipersonnel bombs entered the dikes at a slant and exploded inside the mud walls, doing damage that was invisible in aerial photographs and difficult to repair. I explained that monsoon season was almost upon Vietnam and that if the weakened dikes should give way, hundreds of thousands of people would drown or die from starvation. It was all there on the screen: the rubble of the cities and hamlets I'd visited, the damage to the dikes, the craters, the close-up of where an antipersonnel bomb had entered the side of the dikes, and the beginning of my meeting with the POWs.

I showed the silent film again at a press conference in New York City—and that was the last I saw of it. It has disappeared. All that is left now is a photo that appeared in a number of magazines, of me at the press conference with the image of some of the POWs visible on the screen behind me. I do not know if the footage was stolen by spooks or lost innocently.

I told the press that I hoped people would realize, as I and other foreign visitors had, that the repeated bombing of civilian targets and dikes

BAMBOO

321

was intentional and must be stopped, and how the damage was concentrated where the dikes were most strategic. I told them that the POWs had given me messages for people back home, saying that they were afraid of being bombed and asking their families to support George McGovern for president. (I carried a packet of letters from POWs back to the States with me.)

I was asked how I felt about being accused of treason. I tried to give a "bamboo"-type response and was quoted in the papers the next day saying, "What is a traitor? . . . I cried every day I was in Vietnam. I cried for America. The bombs are falling on Vietnam, but it is an American tragedy. . . . Given the things that America stands for, a war of aggression against the Vietnamese people is a betrayal of the American people. That is where treason lies . . . those who are doing all they can to end the war are the real patriots."

Tom was waiting for me at the airport in New York City when I landed. He whisked me downtown to the Chelsea Hotel, where we holed up for the night like two refugees. I needed rest. I needed to be held.

Tom felt that because he had encouraged me to go, he was responsible for the trouble I'd gotten into, and he promised to try to make it up to me. Both of us realized that it had been a mistake for me to go alone. But I never felt that he was responsible. I hate buck passers.

As we lay in bed in our funky Chelsea Hotel room, I told Tom that I wanted us to have a child together as a pledge of hope for the future. We held each other and wept.

In the period of time right after my return, Representatives Fletcher Thompson (R-Ga.) and Richard Ichord (D-Mo.) accused me of treason. They said I had urged American troops to disobey orders and had given "aid and comfort to the enemy." Representative Thompson, who was running for the U.S. Senate from Georgia, tried to subpoena me to testify before the House Internal Security Council (the updated version of the House Un-American Activities Committee made infamous in the fifties by Senator Joseph McCarthy), but his efforts were blocked. (He subsequently lost the election.) The committee issued me a subpoena, but when my lawyer, Leonard Weinglass, and I sent them a letter saying I



*At the Paris press conference,
pointing to the film showing two of the POWs I met with.
(AP/Wide World Photos)*

32.2

MY LIFE SO FAR

was ready to appear, we were notified that they had adjourned the hearings and would contact us when a new date was set. We never heard from them again.

Soon thereafter, Vincent Albano Jr., chairman of the New York County Republican Committee, called for a boycott of my films.

I find it interesting that the government and news reporters knew that Americans before me had gone to North Vietnam *and* had spoken on Radio Hanoi. This was the first time, however, that the issue of treason was being raised.

The accusations about the bombing of the dikes that I along with others brought back from Vietnam caused an uproar within the administration. UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim held a press conference and said that he'd heard through private sources that the dikes had been bombed. Then Secretary of State William P. Rogers said: "These charges are part of a carefully planned campaign by the North Vietnamese and their supporters to give worldwide circulation to this falsehood." Meanwhile, Sergeant Lonnie D. Franks, an intelligence specialist stationed at Udorn Air Base in Thailand was due to testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee about air force officers involved in bombing falsification of other targets. That investigation was eventually dropped, and only General John Lavelle, the commanding officer who had ordered (or overseen) the falsification, was held responsible.

While the United States may not have been waging an all-out bombing campaign to obliterate the dikes, they were targeting the dikes during the spring of 1972. The evidence that I, and many others, saw was incontrovertible. Perhaps this was done as a threat to get the North Vietnamese to cave in at the negotiating table. The massive B-52 bombing of Hanoi that would stun the world came Christmas was admittedly done to achieve this same thing. Both efforts would fail.

Despite the saber rattling, the Justice Department found I had violated no statutes, including those covering sedition. Attorney General Richard Kleindienst announced in San Francisco on August 14 that there would be no prosecutions. Later, when questioned about why he never prosecuted me under the charge of sedition, Kleindienst stated:

There was a real difficulty technically with respect to proof, but over and above that, I felt and I think most of us shared this view in the

BAMBOO

32.3

Administration, that the damage was slight and the interests in favor of free expression was very high. . . . I thought the interests in favor of free speech in an election year far outweighed any specific advantage of prosecuting a young girl like that who was in Vietnam acting rather foolish.

Two months after my return from Hanoi, President Nixon was informed in a daily briefing paper that "according to excerpts being studied by Congress, Fonda used her Hanoi radio time to pose questions to the U.S. GIs, but limited her advice to pleas for ending the bombing, and didn't urge defections." The following month the FBI gave my files to three of their own in-house reviewers, asking them to examine what the agency had on me and assess whether or not the clandestine investigation should be continued. All three determined that it should be discontinued. One of the three reviewers, a Ms. Herwig, wrote to the FBI, "There are more dangerous characters around needing our attention. Unless the [Department of Justice] orders us to continue, these investigations should be closed. The basis for investigation appears to be—pick someone you dislike and start investigating."

More dangerous characters indeed. Five men using funds from a secret Republican campaign fund had recently been arrested trying to bug the offices of the Democratic National Committee. One of them was the security director for CREEP, the Committee for the Re-Election of the President. At the end of September it would be revealed that while serving as attorney general, John Mitchell had controlled a slush fund used for illegal espionage and sabotage operations against the Democrats and other political opponents.

The bombing of the dikes stopped that August.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FRAMED

We have not grown used to knavery, and to that species of untruth which lies so near to the truth as to be able to wear its clothing, and to turn upon the idealist its seductive and silencing countenance.

—DANIEL BERRIGAN,
Night Flight to Hanoi

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID about my actions against the Vietnam War, and you have just read about my controversial trip. I went because I wanted to expose the lies of the Nixon administration and help stop the killing on both sides. I believe the trip made it harder for Nixon to distract the public's attention from his escalation of the air war, and perhaps it helped end the bombing of the dikes. I wanted to speak to U.S. pilots as I had done on so many occasions during the FTA tour. I did not ask them to desert. I once read in a congressional report that A. William Olson, a representative of the Justice Department, said after studying transcripts of my broadcasts that I had asked the military "to do nothing other than to think." Nothing I did caused any POWs to be tortured. Torture in the prison camps of North Vietnam had stopped by 1969, three years before my trip.

I do regret that I allowed myself to get into a situation where I was photographed on an anti-aircraft gun. I have explained how that happened and how it sent a message that was the opposite of what I was feeling and doing. I regret the angry remark I made when the POWs returned home that enabled apologists for the war to orchestrate the myth of "Hanoi Jane." I was framed and turned into a lightning rod for people's anger, frustration, misinformation, and confusion about the war.

FRAMED

325

The myth of "Hanoi Jane" lingers today; I would like to speak to the charges.

After I came back from North Vietnam, the trip wasn't a big story. While there was a brouhaha about it behind the scenes at the White House, publicly little fuss was made—nothing on television and one small article in *The New York Times*. After all, there had been almost three hundred Americans before me who had gone to Hanoi, and more than eighty broadcasts by Americans over Radio Hanoi had preceded mine. Once the Justice Department announced they had nothing to prosecute me for, what flap there was seemed to evaporate.

The mythmaking began in February 1973—after the U.S. POWs had returned home in a lavish "Operation Homecoming." No previous American POWs had ever received this type of welcome. The combat troops certainly didn't, and this made me angry. I saw that Nixon was using the event to create *something* that resembled victory. It was as close as he would come.

For four years the administration had seen to it that the issue of torture of U.S. POWs in North Vietnam was front-page news. There appears to be a reason for this, though no one knew it at the time. Starting in 1969, when the torture stories began to appear, Nixon had begun secret plans for an escalation of the war, including a major bombing offensive of North Vietnam, the mining of Haiphong harbor, and nuclear contingency plans. This would be a hard pill for the American public to swallow—unless the North Vietnamese could be demonized in a way that would resonate personally with Americans. Thus the torture of the POWs—and securing their release—became the justification for continuing and escalating the war.*

Once the POWs were home, the Pentagon and White House hand-picked some of the highest-ranking POWs—senior officers—to travel the national media circuit, some of them telling of torture. These media sto-

*It was at a press conference in May 1969 that Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird focused publicly on the issue of torture of U.S. prisoners in Hanoi. In his article "The P.O.W. Issue: A National Issue is Born," Dayton (Ohio) *Journal-Herald*, 13-18 Feb. 1971, Seymour Hersh, author and journalist who uncovered the My Lai massacre and the Abu Ghraib Prison scandal, reported that "Laird had, as many officials later acknowledged, somewhat overstated his case."

"Solid evidence of systematic abuse of prisoners has always been missing," Hersh reported, and went on to say that when American families of POWs became alarmed at the reports of torture, they received letters from the Pentagon saying: "We are certain that you will not become unduly concerned over the [torture] briefing if you keep in mind the purpose for which it was tailored."

ries were allowed to become the official narrative, the universal "POW story," giving the impression that *all* the men had been subjected to systematic torture—right up to the end—and that torture was the policy of the North Vietnamese government.

In particular, a Lieutenant Commander David Hoffman (who was among the POWs I met in Hanoi—the one who raised his arm above his head and asked me to tell his wife) was getting extensive media coverage with his story of torture. On national television he claimed that his meeting with me (and another one a week or so later with former attorney general Ramsey Clark) had *caused* him to be tortured—that is, he was tortured to force him to meet me and feign opposition to the war. I do not believe that this was so.

In Vietnam in 1973 Hoffman appeared *six times* at meetings with antiwar visitors, more than almost any other POW. Film footage taken by U.S. delegations at several of these meetings—footage I have actually reviewed—shows Hoffman appearing healthy and unusually verbal in his opposition to the war. He also signed antiwar statements. He has never claimed he was tortured to attend *those other* meetings or to sign those statements. But the visits with Ramsey Clark and with me were widely publicized, and I suppose he needed the allegation of torture to explain his attendance at them. Perhaps more important, the government needed a way to malign Ramsey Clark and me.*

According to books written by some POWs, conditions in the POW camps improved in the four years preceding their release—that is, from 1969 until 1973. They describe how the food got better, how they were given roommates and allowed time in the game room, how there was volleyball, Ping-Pong, and exercise. This explains why, upon their release, *Newsweek* magazine wrote, "The [torture] stories seemed incongruent with the men telling them—a trim, trig lot who, given a few pounds more flesh, might have stepped right out of a recruiting poster."

Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Edison Miller, who was also among the POWs I met in Hanoi, was in the same camp as Hoffman. He says that about eighty to one hundred POWs were being held there.

"The visits with delegations were strictly volunteer," Miller told me recently. "I know of only two or three guys out of one hundred who

*A handwritten note from President Nixon to H. R. Haldeman says that "the POW's need to have the worst quotes of R. Clark and Fonda" to use in their TV appearances, but this information "shouldn't come from the White House."

didn't want to meet with you. At the least, it was a way to break up the boredom of the day." Hoffman's co-pilot and prison roommate, Norris Charles, agrees that there were more than enough POWs in the compound who wanted to meet with me and with Clark, and that he never saw or heard of any torture in his camp. Navy commander Walter Wilbur, who was also in the Zoo, has said the same thing. In the spring of 1973, before Hoffman made his claims of torture, Commander Wilbur was released and told the *Los Angeles Times* about my visit with the POWs, saying, "She could see that we were healthy and had not been tortured."

Hoffman's roommate said there was no torture; according to the POWs themselves, torture stopped in 1969. *Not that any torture is justified or that anyone who had been tortured should have been prevented from telling about it.* But the White House presented a distorted picture of what actually occurred.

In my anger at how the entire POW situation was being manipulated and how they were treated as opposed to the ground troops, I made a mistake I deeply regret. I said that the POWs claiming torture were liars, hypocrites, and pawns. I said, "I'm quite sure that there were incidents of torture. . . . But the pilots who are saying it was the policy of the Vietnamese and that it was systematic, I believe that that's a lie."

I firmly believe that the POWs I met with had not been tortured. But what I didn't know at the time was that prior to 1969 there had in fact been systematic torture of POWs. I found it difficult to believe, based on the Vietnamese I met during my visit, that torture would be approved—any more than I could have believed, prior to the Winter Soldier investigation or the Abu Ghraib and other Iraqi prison scandals, that GIs could commit atrocities. I was wrong and I am sorry.

My heart had always been with the soldiers, and I should have been clear that my anger was at the Nixon administration. It was the administration, in its cynical determination to keep hostilities alive, that tried to use the POWs. It was the deceitful blaming of me for torture, together with the Nixon administration's manipulation of the entire POW story and my unfortunate reaction to it, that was responsible for a dramatic upsurge of attacks against me. These, as well as a wave of inflammatory stories about my trip to Hanoi, are what launched the myth of "Hanoi Jane."

I became a lightning rod. People who defended the war saw me as antisoldier—something I am not and never have been, as I believe this

book shows. Even though I knew the attacks on me were based on lies, my heart ached from them, because I never blamed the soldiers for the war or for any atrocities that were committed.

The attacks didn't let up. By the end of the nineties, truly grotesque lies were again circulated about me over the Internet (and continue as of this writing), although even former POW Captain Mike McGrath (USN ret.), president of the organization Nam-POW, says that the story circulated on the Internet is a hoax.

In spite of the efforts to demonize me, a 1976 *Redbook* magazine poll had me as one of the ten most admired women in America. In 1985, another poll—the U.S. News-Roper poll—showed that I was rated the number one heroine of young Americans, and the *Ladies' Home Journal*-Roper poll that same year listed me as the fourth most admired woman in America. My books and videos continued to be best-sellers and my films, at least through the early eighties, were very successful. I tell you this not to boast but because I think it's important to show that the attacks and lies aimed at me seemed not to be sticking with a sizable number of Americans.

But the attacks didn't let up. In 1988, when it was announced that I would be filming *Stanley & Iris* with Robert De Niro in Waterbury, Connecticut, a furor was unleashed that raged for months and was reported widely in the press. The uproar was launched by ultraconservative elements in the area, led by Gaetano Russo, a World War II veteran and former chair of the local Republican Party committee who had been defeated in his campaigns both for mayor and for Congress. Russo formed the American Coalition Against Hanoi Jane, held town meetings, and tried to pass resolutions to bar me from Waterbury. He was joined in his efforts by the local Republican congressman, John G. Rowland, who later became governor of Connecticut and resigned in 2004 in the face of a federal corruption investigation and threats of impeachment.

No sooner was it announced that I would be filming in Waterbury than a Ku Klux Klan flag began to fly across the street from the Water-

bury newspaper and several KKK members attended a meeting at the VFW hall in Naugatuck, trying to whip up the hostility against me. The Naugatuck Vietnam vets told the KKK to leave. But there was a large population of Vietnam veterans in the area and the controversy quickly caught on with them. As Rich Roland (retired First Marine Division, Seventh Marines) from Waterbury told me recently, "You were a lightning rod for the vets. A lot of guys had come back and didn't feel accepted as people. There were all those feelings of anger and frustration about our war experiences that had never been expressed and they all focused on you. After all, what could we say to the government?"

One afternoon Gaetano Russo organized a rally in Waterbury's Library Park, where I was hanged in effigy from a tree. Many people came out for the event and it was decided they would try to get a resolution passed by the board of the city's aldermen to bar me from coming.

Vietnam veteran Rich Roland was there to speak in favor of the resolution and was shocked that only eight Vietnam vets showed up. Where are all the people? he asked himself. This is a joke. The resolution was overwhelmingly defeated.

My friend and publicist Stephen Rivers had been monitoring the situation. I was in Mexico filming *Old Gringo* and Stephen kept me updated with news clippings. I remember studying the pictures in the papers that showed the faces of the veterans who attended that town hall meeting. These were familiar faces. I entertained guys like this with the FTA show. I knew how to talk to them. Because of the time I spent with the GI movement, I felt I was closer to their experience than other people who weren't in Vietnam.

I asked Stephen to try to organize a meeting with the Waterbury vets—just the ones who were in Vietnam.

When I arrived in Waterbury Stephen had arranged for a local minister to host the meeting with the vets in his church hall. I don't recall being afraid as I went into the meeting room. If anything, I felt relief that the time for the encounter had come. I trusted the situation. I knew in my heart I had never felt anything but compassion for the soldiers in Vietnam. I wasn't sure I would be able to communicate this to all of them, but I was confident that, at least for some, this face-to-face would have a positive effect.

There were twenty-six veterans sitting in a large circle when I entered the room. Some of them were in uniform. A few wore buttons and

hats reading HANOI JANE and TRAITOR. These men had been the ground troops, the grunts, as they called themselves.

I could tell they were surprised that I was alone, no escort, no bodyguards. Later one of them said to me, "You walked in, and I said to myself, Oh, she's so little. Just one little woman."

Rich Roland wore a camouflage jacket and had an ace of spades in his pocket, the "death card." When he went to Vietnam in 1969 he took with him an entire pack of aces of spades. His Marine Corps company was known as the Delta Death Dealers, and they would leave an ace of spades on each enemy corpse they killed.

"I intended to throw the card in your face if I wasn't happy with what happened in the meeting," Rich told me later, in 2003.

I took my place in the circle and suggested we go around the room and each tell our story. I began. I told them I wanted to put my trip to North Vietnam into context so that they would know why I went. I told them how concerned many people were at the time about the bombing of the dikes right before the monsoon season. I told them the government had denied the bombings. I told them many of the things I have written in these pages and about my previous work with active duty GIs and veterans. I told them how sorry I was that some of my actions had appeared callous with regard to U.S. soldiers and that that was the last thing I intended. I apologized for that and said that I would go to my grave regretting that pain and misunderstanding—but that I could not apologize for going to North Vietnam and doing everything I could to expose Nixon's lies and help end the war.

"I'm proud that I did that," I said, "just as you are proud of doing what you felt you had to do. No one has a corner on righteousness in this. We were all caught in the horror and did what we felt we had to do. All of us were affected. None of us will be the same. All of us were deceived."

Then we went around the room. It was raw, angry, and emotional. Many tears were shed. It felt like an exorcism. I had not realized how many families in that part of Connecticut were first-generation Americans. For these young men, serving their country in Vietnam was a rite of passage into true citizenship. One said to me, "There are two ways we can become truly American. One is to go to college—my sister has gone to college—and the other is to join the armed services. I joined. And I became American." The next man had also joined for this reason.

"But we're the first American soldiers to lose a war," he said, trying to stifle his emotions.

I was staggered. It had never occurred to me that our soldiers blamed themselves and thought they weren't good enough.

"But you didn't lose the war," I said. "It was not a war that could have been won—and Kennedy and Johnson both *knew* that. It was the men who *sent* you there who were responsible for losing, not the soldiers!" I despaired at ever being able to convince them of this.

Some talked about things they had done out of hatred for me.

"Every time I go into a video store," one said, "I make a point of turning all your exercise videos around on the shelf." Another said, "I have never read a magazine that had an article about you."

Rich Roland had come into the meeting furious and was made more so when he heard me speak about the innocent Vietnamese civilians who had been killed by our smart bombs. "You tell me the difference between those dead civilians and a GI lying there with his dick stuck in his mouth," he demanded when it was his turn to speak.

I don't remember exactly what I said to him, but it wasn't my answer that was important for Rich; it was the fact that for the first time he had expressed some of what was inside of him. "Coming to the meeting in spite of my anger at you was positive. It was good for me to be able to vent my feelings. I heard you say you were sorry, and I was able to accept it," he told me recently.

The meeting lasted for about four hours. As we were winding down, Stephen Rivers came into the room and told me that word of the meeting had gotten out. I had wanted it to be confidential, but the local Channel 8 TV crew was outside wanting to talk to us. I told the assembled men about the situation and asked them how they wanted to handle it.

"Look, I'm not the one that went to the press," I said, "but they're here. What do you want to do? We can sneak out the back or we can invite them in and tell them what happened. It's up to you."

They wanted to invite the press in, and in they came, expecting, I suppose, to find an angry free-for-all. Instead they found us talking quietly, some of us hugging, a few of the men sitting silently. The reporters were clearly surprised to find so little tension in the room. Vietnam veteran Bob Genovese told the reporter (and it was broadcast on ABC's *20/20* the following week), "There was a lot of things that she talked about that I personally didn't know about before, and I don't think a lot

of the men in the room knew before, and it helped to explain some of the reasons why she did some of the things she did back in 1972."

Instead of throwing his ace of spades in my face, Rich went out and threw it in the trash. "That was the beginning of my healing," he says.

The vets and I couldn't have started from two more wildly divergent places, but the fact of our being able to face one another for those four hours was important for all of us. I have come to feel that one reason healing doesn't happen more often is that the two sides don't allow themselves to really hear each other's narratives.

Empathy is the answer.

There must be a stepping back, a looking at the big picture. Stepping back is hard when your life has been traumatized and hatred has built up against the "enemy" and against those who opposed the war and seem to have sided with the enemy. This is why wars begun unnecessarily and for the wrong reasons—like the one we are fighting in Iraq as I write this—develop a momentum of revenge and justification. *We have to keep going. Our men and women can't have died in vain. The people on the other side are truly evil. If we pull out now, we'll lose our credibility. Better to continue to send Americans to fight and perhaps die than to say we made a mistake.*

After my meeting with the vets in that church hall, the energy seemed to drain out of the controversy. There were always a handful of demonstrators around whenever we filmed outdoors, but few of them were Vietnam veterans. During the worst of it, a dozen women from Waterbury sent me a videotape of themselves, one by one, expressing support for me, telling me they admired the way I lived my life, and thanking me for being a role model. They will never know how much that helped get me through those bruising times.

Later that summer Robert De Niro and I worked with a coalition of local Connecticut Vietnam veterans, including Rich Roland, to hold a fund-raising event at Lake Quassapaug. There were threats against us; we were warned that helicopters would fly over and drop things; local officials refused to take part. In spite of it all, on the evening of July 29 over two thousand people came. Thousands of dollars' worth of food was do-

nated for the event and over one hundred volunteers, most of them Vietnam vets, worked hard to make it a success. Together we raised \$27,000 for children who had birth defects as a result of their fathers' exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

Supporting our troops has always been of great interest to me, partly because I have spent so much time listening to soldiers, veterans, and their families and have seen their issues up close and personal. I wonder how many Americans were as outraged as I was when—as soon as our soldiers had left for Iraq in 2003 with the Bush administration's "Support Our Troops" ringing in the air—Congress cut their benefits, and entire classes were frozen out of the VA system. Policies were proposed that would exclude some five hundred thousand veterans from the VA health-care system. An attempt was made to increase fees and co-payments for medical services, which will drive another million veterans out of the system, and to cut 60 percent of federal education subsidies for soldiers' children. This is patriotism?

We create victims of new wars while not even taking care of the veterans of past wars.*

*Actually, when it comes to caring about the welfare of our soldiers, polls from the late 1970s published in congressional studies show that people who opposed the Vietnam War were much more sympathetic to the special needs of veterans than were those who supported the war.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ADIEU,
LONE RANGER

The problem with the world is that we draw the circle of our family too small.

—MOTHER TERESA

FUNNY, BUT DESPITE OUR COMMITMENT to having a child, there never really was any discussion between Tom and me about the nature of our future together. Knowing the other women he'd been in relationships with, I have to assume he had had such conversations with them: *What do we want from this coupling? Where do you think this is going?* I assumed that the avoidance of explicit long-term commitment must have been my fault. After so long as a Lone Ranger I was ready to have someone in my corner and was just holding my breath, hoping things would evolve in a stable and loving direction, fearful that if I tried to make the future explicit, the bubble would burst. I didn't know how to ask for what I wanted, for fear of losing what I had. What we sensed (although this was never talked about, either) was that on the political level we made an unexpected and powerful duo—an odd couple in an odd time.

Tom was living with me by now and supporting himself writing and teaching. In June 1972, right before my trip to Vietnam, we had discussed putting together a national speaking tour for the fall aimed at exposing Nixon's escalation of the war and reenergizing the peace movement. Tom named it the Indochina Peace Campaign—IPC. The plan was to make a two-month, ninety-five-city speaking tour of unprecedented proportions. Joining us as full-time members of the tour

were Holly Near and George Smith, who had been a prisoner of the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam for three years.

I vividly recall the day Tom sat on the edge of our bed while I cut off his long braid. The event had a ceremonial, rite-of-passage quality: We were leaving behind our counterculture trappings and reentering the mainstream; it wouldn't do if the way we looked turned people off to what we were saying. So I trimmed Tom's hair, bought him a suit and tie, exchanged his rubber sandals for brown leather, and got myself a couple of wrinkle-proof conservative outfits.

The tour began on Labor Day at the Ohio State Fair, emblematic of our desire to appeal to Middle Americans. The 1972 tour was the most fulfilling experience of my life up to then. I was living full out, every neuron fired up, every bit of energy being tapped. I wasn't just speaking; I was watching and listening and learning every day, committing every ounce of everything I had to what I believed in, and doing it with someone I loved and admired, alongside scores of kindred spirits. Many of the people who were involved in the IPC tour became important influences in my life, and I want to name them: besides my roommates Carol and Jack (more about them later), there were Karen Nussbaum, Ira Arlook, Helen Williams, Jay Westbrook, Anne Froines, Shari Whitehead Lawson, Sam Hurst, Paul Ryder, Larry Levin, and Fred Branfman. I could write a whole chapter on each of them, but the book would be too long. They were my family in many ways and my role models. At last I had the political home I'd been missing. I no longer had to be the Lone Ranger.

For the most part we were received enthusiastically by huge crowds. I relied heavily on quotes from the Pentagon Papers, thinking that citing the government's own words would help people accept the truth. It was then that I first discovered it isn't enough to give the facts. Some people resist believing anything that might shatter their belief in their government—no matter how far from reality their misplaced belief takes them, no matter how many young lives might be squandered. This mass denial was painfully demonstrated again in our 2004 elections.

Occasionally in interviews I would be questioned about the right of celebrities to speak out and contradict officialdom. I believe in a democracy. Everyone should be able to question and dissent. When the public is being lied to, how else can the truth be known? I think it is because celebrities command a wider audience when they speak that they are at-

tacked and infantilized so often by the Right: "Who do these stars think they are?" We're involved citizens who love our country and want to voice views that might otherwise not be heard. What are involved, informed citizens to do when presidents, vice presidents, and secretaries of state give the public falsified evidence to justify war?

During the entire tour we had only one day off, which Tom and I spent in bed and talking. I remember it well, because of all the questions Tom asked me about myself—about my mother, my father, what I thought about movies, how I thought being a celebrity had affected me. After five months we were still getting to know each other, but no one I had been emotionally involved with before had ever asked me these questions so intently. It made me realize how doggedly I had plowed through life, and with little introspection. In the midst of our grueling schedule, we were trying to get pregnant. It happened one cold October night somewhere near Buffalo, New York. As had been the case with Vanessa's conception, I knew immediately that it had happened.

During the tour Vanessa was living with her father in Paris. I had a perpetual knot in my stomach about her and would call two or three times a week to see how she was and let her know I was thinking about her. But in my heart I knew this long-distance stuff didn't hack it. It was what my father had done with my brother and me: absentee worrying in the hope that it would be interpreted as love. Was I shirking a more important duty than ending the war? Was this a ghost that would come to haunt me? (Yes.) At least my instincts about Vadim had been right. He was a good father to our daughter; he was assuming the role mothers usually play. But I would be criticized in ways fathers rarely are when they're away!

I have scattered visceral memories of the tour. In a drafty gymnasium somewhere in the Midwest, a young Vietnam veteran told the high school audience that he had personally raped and killed Vietnamese women. I could see him shaking as he spoke. The audience disbelief was palpable: How could this man, who seemed just like them, have done these things? Someone yelled at him to shut up. He stopped, looked around the gym, and then said quietly, "Listen, I have to live with this the rest of my life. The least you can do is know that it happened."

Sometimes things got rough. In Kensington, a working-class section of Philadelphia, a hundred angry men stormed the police barricade and



Singing with Holly Near (on left) and a local organizer during the first IPC national tour.

attacked me, pulling out chunks of my hair. One man told an Associated Press reporter, "She should be content to stay home and be a housewife."

Slowly, as I gained confidence, I was learning to speak more personally. I remember the first time I spoke of my journey, from *Barbarella* in 1968 to becoming an activist; of how empty my life had felt back then, that I hadn't thought a woman could change anything—except table settings or diapers. My message: "There was a time not so long ago when I didn't know where Vietnam was and I didn't want to believe what I was hearing about the war. Now I am a different person, and if I can change, so can you."

I could sense myself connecting with people better. This was a lesson that would serve me well in the future—once I had fully learned it. It took a while. Oddly, I had a hard time being personal in my speeches when Tom was present. His brilliance as a speaker intimidated me, and I worried that I wouldn't be "political" enough. Over his decades of activism Tom had grasped the big picture, one that allowed him to place the Vietnam War in the context of U.S. history and global history.

But it was *his* big picture.

Was there a big picture—a unifying narrative—that I could embrace as a woman? Not knowing the answer, I took shelter in Tom's narrative, which was compelling and enlightening. It would take me thirty years and then some to discover my own, gender-grounded narrative.

In spite of everything, Nixon won reelection in 1972 in a landslide. Ultraconservative presidential candidate George Wallace dropped from the race when he was shot and Nixon inherited his supporters. Right before the elections, Henry Kissinger had given his infamous "peace is at hand" speech, claiming that a peace agreement with the North Vietnamese had been reached in Paris. The war-weary American public fell for it. Our ally in South Vietnam, President Nguyen Van Thieu, hadn't agreed to the terms of the peace agreement, but the American people were never told that.

Nixon and Kissinger weren't the first to deceive the American public about the war. Lyndon Johnson, needing to escalate the war to avoid losing it (true for Nixon as well), had claimed that North Vietnamese boats had fired on U.S. ships in an unprovoked attack in the Gulf of Tonkin. Thus he got Congress to pass the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which allowed

him to begin bombing North Vietnam. It turned out the Tonkin Gulf incident was a hoax.* This terrible deceit aimed at justifying war has, I believe, been surpassed only by what the Bush II administration did to get Congress to authorize sending troops into Iraq.

Then came the final hoax of 1972: Despite Congress's clear mandate to end the war and Kissinger's pre-election promise of "peace at hand," saturation bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong began on December 17 and lasted into the first week of the new year. The North Vietnamese mounted an air defense that cost us heavily. It left ninety-nine airmen missing and thirty-one new POWs.

Feeling sickened and powerless, Tom and I went to a screening of *Last Tango in Paris* but had to walk out in the middle: With the bombing on our minds, anal copulation with butter didn't sit well.

Why would five administrations, Democratic and Republican, knowing (according to the Pentagon Papers) that we couldn't win militarily (short of annihilation), knowing they would have to keep escalating to avoid losing—why would they choose to postpone failure regardless of how many lives that cost?

Partly it was to get elected. President Kennedy told Arthur Schlesinger in November 1961 that if the United States ever went into war in Vietnam, we'd lose just like the French. But Kennedy was afraid the right wing would defeat him in the next election if he withdrew.

Mostly I believe it has to do with the perceived loss of manhood, the fear of being seen as soft—on anything, and especially Communism (or terrorism or whatever else seems to threaten). It is relevant to consider the views of Daniel Ellsberg, who has perhaps studied United States policy in Vietnam in more depth and for a longer time than most Americans.

"My best guess," Ellsberg said to *Salon* on November 19, 2002, "is that Lyndon Johnson psychologically did not want to be called weak on Communism. As he put it to Doris Kearns, he said he would be called an 'unmanly man' if he got out of Vietnam, a weakling, an appeaser. . . . Many Americans have died in the last fifty years, and maybe ten times as many Asians, because American politicians feared to be called unmanly."

Unfortunately, there are some so wedded to the notion of American omnipotence (manhood) that they claim the right to destroy any regime

*In 1968, a reinvestigation by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee suggested that the "incident" of our ships being attacked was "imagined or invented."

they don't like, scoff at the United Nations, and consider it, as reported recently in *The New York Times*, "reflexive submission" to adhere to international law. In his book *War and Gender*, Joshua Goldstein, a professor of international relations at American University, writes: "As war is gendered masculine, so peace is gendered feminine. Thus the manhood of men who oppose war becomes vulnerable to shaming." They are labeled wimps, pussies, or girlie men. (Beware of men who use words that relate pejoratively to females when describing the "other side.") For them, national omnipotence and their own potency are joined. They'd rather disappear from public life than be blamed for pulling out. The most dangerous leaders are those (usually, but not always, men) who were bullied and shamed by their parents (usually, but not always their fathers). War and the perpetuation of social inequities will be their way of proving themselves qualified to belong to the "manhood" club, which sees strength (violence, homophobia) and hierarchy (racism, misogyny, power over) as their ticket in. It is up to women—and men of conscience—to define a *democratic manhood* less susceptible to shaming because its virility is not dependent on dominance.

This has never been as apparent as during the last few years. Look at George W. Bush's macho posturing in relation to war, his "Bring it on" rhetoric, and his "Are you man enough?" challenge to John Kerry. Then there's Dick Cheney's implication that supporting the UN made Kerry effeminate or army lieutenant general William Boykin's "I knew that my God was bigger than his." The patriarchal mine's-bigger-than-yours paradigm and drive for control has the entire world tilted in dangerous imbalance, damaging not only individual women, men, and children, but entire peoples. In *Revolution from Within* Gloria Steinem wrote that we need to change patriarchal institutions "if we are to stop producing leaders whose unexamined early lives are then played out on a national and international stage." This is one reason why today, in my third act, I am committed to helping educate boys and girls against these arbitrary and destructive, violence-producing gender roles.

History shows us that nothing—no nation, no individual—remains number one forever. So remaining strong but also humble and empathic on your way up ensures that you will set a good example and not be a lonely ruin when you come down. A soft landing among friends is always preferable to a crash in hostile territory.

Enough of the Lone Ranger, in all his forms—even my own.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE FINAL PUSH

We will fight you with all the joys / of a woman in childbirth.
—VIETNAMESE POET TO RICHARD NIXON

I WAS BOTH IN LOVE with and in awe of Tom. For me he was friend, mentor, lover, savior, pillar of support, and example of what I hoped I could become. I saw him as a pure person who could not be corrupted, someone who was on an eternal quest to understand human nature. I loved watching him devour books and I loved watching him while his left hand curled like a claw around his pen as he covered page after page of the yellow legal-size pads he preferred.

I remember the day he called his mother, Gene, to tell her I was pregnant. There was a long pause. "What's the matter, Mom?" he asked, and then, with an occasional look to me, he just listened.

When he finally hung up he said, "Well, my mother wants to know if we're getting married. She says people won't like it if we have a child and aren't married. She said, 'What if you go on the Johnny Carson show to talk about the war and all he wants to know is why you aren't married? Is that a battle you want to have on top of all your other battles?'"

Right on target, Gene! I thought. I wanted to get married. I wanted to be with Tom forever. (I hadn't been that certain with Vadim.) But I had avoided bringing up the m-word with Tom and was elated his mother had jumped in. Perhaps Tom was, too, because it didn't take but a few minutes for the two of us to agree that marriage would be a good idea.

But we couched it in political terms. Needing a political justification for everything was fast becoming a pattern of ours. I think it made Tom comfortable—and if he was comfortable, I was, too.

Vadim was friendly and funny when I called him to ask for a divorce in January 1973. We had been apart, really, for two years. I could tell we would have a better friendship as exes than we had had as marrieds. (I wasn't the only ex of his who felt this way.)

I was three months pregnant when Tom and I were married on January 19, 1973. The ceremony took place in the living room of my home with the two of us sitting on a brick ledge in front of the fireplace, my brother on one side, Holly Near next to him, the Episcopal minister on the other side. An eclectic group of about forty people sat facing us: Dad, holding four-year-old Vanessa on his lap, with his wife, Shirlee, next to him; and Tom's mother, Gene, who had flown in from Detroit. Holly and Peter sang us a wedding song that she'd written. As Tom said, it wasn't exactly Norman Rockwell, but then it was hard to find anything Rockwellian in those days. The marriage vows included a promise to maintain a sense of humor—only one of the promises we failed to keep.

My relationship with my father had been shifting subtly since Tom and I had gotten together. It was as if my being with a man again somehow made me okay—or at least not his responsibility—and it helped that Dad liked Tom. First of all, Tom, like Dad and Vadim, was a fisherman; second, Dad was impressed with how Tom could deliver an eloquent speech without notes; third, they both came from the middle of the country. In addition, Dad clearly wanted to mend fences and be there for me. Even today I am moved as I write this.

Tom and I wanted to find a name for our baby that was both American and Vietnamese, as a way to acknowledge what had brought us together and motivated us to have a child. The only name I could think of that met this criterion was Troy (Troi in Vietnamese). We also decided we didn't want to saddle our child with either of our surnames (both Fonda and Hayden carried too much baggage), so we chose Tom's mother's maiden name, Garity. The middle name, Tom decided, would be O'Donovan, after the Irish national hero O'Donovan Rossa. Troy O'Donovan Garity. It felt right.

Not long after our wedding, former Nixon aides G. Gordon Liddy and James W. McCord Jr. were convicted of conspiracy, burglary and other



*Just after we wed, sitting in front of the fireplace.
Left to right: Holly Near, Peter, me, Tom, and Reverend York.
(AP/Wide World Photos)*



*Pregnant in my purple poncho at a Claremont College antiwar rally
with Ron Kovic. February 1973. This is when I heard Ron say.*

tapping in the Watergate incident. Meanwhile the Indochina Peace Campaign had opened a national office in Ocean Park, the beach community just south of Santa Monica. One day while I was in the office working on the layout of our newly launched newspaper, *Indochina Focal Point*, I started to miscarry and was ordered to bed for a month, just as had happened at the end of my first trimester with Vanessa. Actually it was fortuitous: I needed downtime to reflect on my so-called career and what, if anything, I wanted to do about it. Tom or Ruby would bring me coffee in the morning and then drive Vanessa to school while I lay there and thought how slim the chances were that I would be offered the kinds of movies I wanted to make; in spite of the need for money, I couldn't conceive of spending three months (the average time for a feature film) doing something I didn't believe in when there was so much else to be done. But could I actually make my own movies? I knew I was not a businesswoman: I have always been numerically challenged. Faced with anything that has to do with numbers—costs, profits, distances, or bomb tonnage—my mind goes blank. Perhaps this is because my mother was always doing numbers on her adding machine and my father hated it. Whatever the reasons, I was at a disadvantage as a producer. What I thought I could be good at, however, was conceiving a story.

The week before being sent to bed, I had shared a platform at an antiwar rally in Claremont, California, with Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic, a highly decorated Vietnam marine now in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down from a shrapnel wound to his spine. In time everyone would know Ron's story: Tom Cruise would play him in the film based on his autobiography, *Born on the Fourth of July*. I can still see Ron on the speaker's platform, ferocious in his wheelchair, insistent, articulate, telling how he had been a believer, had enlisted and reenlisted, how he'd been wounded and paralyzed, and how, on his journey back from war through rat-infested, understaffed VA hospitals, he realized that he'd been used and discarded. This had got him thinking about the entire nature of the war and the macho ethic behind it, the realization, he said, that had saved him. Then he added: "I may have lost my body, but I've gained my mind."

As I lay in bed, this sentence haunted me. It echoed the redemptive journeys I'd seen the Winter Soldier veterans take. Could a movie be built around Ron's sentence?

I began to imagine a story: Two men, both believers, go to Vietnam;

one returns like Ron, angry but able to shed the old warrior ethos and free his mind; the other returns brittle and empty, unable to let go of the militaristic myths of what a man should be. I didn't know where to fit in a role for me, but I didn't really care. It was about the two men and the transformation and salvation of one of them.

I mentioned the idea to my friend Bruce Gilbert, an IPC staffer who was a film buff and dreamed of becoming a producer. We had often talked about the kind of movie we'd like to see made about the Vietnam War. We decided Bruce would try to develop a story draft based on Ron Kovic's sentence, and I insisted that screenwriter Nancy Dowd work on it as well, to ensure a woman's perspective.

Nancy and Bruce went to work for hardly any money, since we had no studio to put up development funding. With the help of my lawyer and my agent, Mike Medavoy, we got Bruce a job as a script reader with an independent movie production company so he could start learning about scripts. He was there for a year, and because he was able to get copies of early drafts of masterpieces like *Chinatown*, he had opportunities to learn the ways in which scripts evolve, as directors and actors become attached. Bruce came to me one day and said that he'd rather be a partner than an employee of mine, and instead of seeing this as a brash move by an inexperienced young man, I made a leap of faith. I figured someone who could organize rallies the way he could, with meticulous attention to detail, could probably be just the partner I needed. So we formed a production company and called it IPC Films, in honor of the Indochina Peace Campaign, the organization that had brought us together (we didn't tell outsiders what the initials stood for).

Nearly six years later, *Coming Home* won Academy Awards for Jon Voight, me, and screenwriters Nancy Dowd, Waldo Salt, and Robert Jones. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

While I was still bedridden, Tom convinced me that we needed to relocate our home closer to the IPC office in Ocean Park, where he had lived before moving in with me. Sell my house? That I'd had only one year? I loved my house. But more than anything I wanted to do what Tom thought was right. Though he never said so outright, I believe Tom felt that how you lived reflected whether you were pure in your politics (read: "one of the people") or just an armchair liberal (read: "bourgeois"). Given my Rocky Mountain epiphany three years earlier, I held this perspective myself, so I was ready to be challenged by whatever Tom

offered up. Several days later he came back and told me he'd found a place, one block from the beach, for \$45,000. We bought it without my even seeing it.

The Ocean Park of today is gentrified with swank restaurants and clothing stores. Later, I heard that in 2003 our \$45,000 house was sold for \$2 million. But back in the seventies Ocean Park consisted primarily of seedy bars and thrift shops, and it was redlined, meaning that banks considered it a poor investment and refused to make any loans for community development.

When the danger of my miscarriage had passed and I was able to get up again, Tom took me to see the new house he had chosen for us. It sat on the south side of a narrow, one-way, one-block-long street called Wadsworth Avenue, which ran almost to the beach. All the little streets were lined with wooden houses built side by side in the 1920s as summer homes for wealthier folks, who would take the famous red trolley from Los Angeles down San Vicente Boulevard to the beach. In their time the houses must have been charming, but now most, including ours, had been converted into duplexes and were run-down, with thin, uninsulated walls and floors vaguely slanted from sinking into the sand over the years.

The residents of Ocean Park were an interesting mix of blue-collar, radical, and counterculture. In a one-story house next to us lived a conservative Catholic family: a burly night watchman, his wife, and their many children, one of whom was Vanessa's age. Next to them was a two-story building; on the ground floor lived a Maoist writer and his bright, redheaded son, also Vanessa's age. Across the street lived a group of women activists Tom knew. With few exceptions there were no driveways or garages, so we all had to park on the street.

I recall the first time I walked into the house. It was dark and dampish. I had to swallow hard, but I was determined to show I could make the move with no complaints, though it would mean saying good-bye to Ruby Ellen, who had been my faithful friend and assistant for almost three years. On top of that, Tom felt we didn't need the entire house for ourselves, so to save money Jack Nichol and Carol Kurtz, both with IPC, moved in on the ground floor. This was a good thing, actually. During the times of increased controversy that were about to roll over me, Carol in particular was a pillar of support, stability, and tenderness. She was a lanky, handsome woman ten years my junior, with soft brown hair and a ready giggle. Both Carol and Jack had been part of the Red Family col-

lective, had reconciled with Tom (Carol was the woman who cried on my doorstep that Tom had no emotions), were intelligent, committed activists, and were the parents of a ten-month-old boy named Corey—the only other couple we worked with who had started a family.

Jack and Carol had the bedroom, dining room, and kitchen on the ground floor, and we shared the living room. Tom had persuaded Fred Branfman, a writer and researcher who had developed outreach materials for the IPC tour, to move from Washington, D.C., into a small room on one side of our front porch, where he slept on a straw mat with his diminutive Vietnamese wife, Thoa. Fred stands about six feet five, and when I would come down in the mornings to take Vanessa to school, I would risk tripping over his feet, which always stuck out past the door.

Off the other side of the porch, a separate door led up a narrow flight of stairs to the second floor, where we lived. It consisted of a bedroom that looked out onto the street with a minute closet and a small bedroom opposite ours for Vanessa and Corey. The kitchen was tiny, with no vent, and when I turned on the stove cockroaches would sometimes run out. I just plowed on, always thinking I'd deal with it later.

There was little privacy. The walls were made of tongue-and-groove slats so thin that if I put a nail in a wall to hang a picture, it would stick right through to the other side (lovmaking was subdued). My father, only half joking, called the house "the shack."

We didn't have a dishwasher or a washing machine, so twice a week I would take our clothes to the nearby laundromat. One day, when I'd stepped next door for coffee, someone stole all my clothes, including the silk pajamas I'd worn in North Vietnam.

I set to work brightening up the place with a pregnant woman's nesting intensity, and in spite of the downside I actually loved being there. This was community living of a kind I had never experienced. Because the streets were so short and the houses so close (and all had porches), all the neighbors knew one another and would exchange sugar, coffee, and gossip. There were kids for Vanessa to play with, and the beach with swings and slides was a block away. Because I could always hear the sound of breaking surf and smell the salt air, living in our home on Wadsworth Avenue felt like a return to the summers of my childhood. We would stay there for close to ten years.

When celebrity friends would visit, they'd usually ask if the lack of privacy and security bothered me. There were several reasons I liked being so accessible: The first had to do with the issue of "coming down

from the mountaintop." Then, when my children came of school age, both went to public schools, and we didn't want their friends who came over to play to find that we lived differently from them.

Furthermore, my relationship to my profession had changed. I was beginning to feel I could be in control of the content of my films, and this made me care more and want to go deeper as an actress. How can an artist plumb reality if he or she lives in the clouds? Of course, the fact of my being a movie star created an inevitable separation; most people have a hard time overcoming their intimidation around celebrities. But you'd be amazed how much this separation can be minimized, and I really worked at it. It wasn't that difficult. I've always had a high tolerance for what other celebrities might call inconvenience or discomfort.

Also, for me, the security and privacy issue that so concerned some of my more famous friends was not about being accessible to fans. It was the *government* that was the problem. The first year we were in the house (during the Nixon administration), our home was broken into, drawers turned upside down, all our files and papers strewn about, and our phone tapped, and one day an FBI undercover agent posing as a reporter came to interview me in order to confirm that I had been three months pregnant at the time of our marriage. How do I know this? Because I later read it in my FBI files.

In retrospect I wouldn't have given up the Wadsworth experience for anything, but I no longer believe that it is necessary to prove your political purity by living in a manner that makes your teeth clench. If you can afford to hire someone to help run a comfortable, attractive home, there is nothing wrong with that, as long as you pay a decent wage with benefits and as long as materialism doesn't become your focus in life.

During my pregnancy, I spent a lot of time doing research for the film that Bruce and Nancy were developing. I traveled to San Diego to interview wives of Vietnam veterans. One told me, "I talk to my husband now, but it's as if there's no one there. He's empty. It's like I can hear my voice echoing inside him." A character was beginning to emerge for me to play: My husband goes to war while I remain at home and go through my own changes because of a relationship with a paralyzed vet I meet in the hospital.

I learned a lot from a Vietnam vet named Shad Meshad, who had been a psych officer in Vietnam. He was a friend of Ron Kovic's, equally charismatic and fearless, and had an intuitive way with troubled vets,

who were flooding to the warm climes of Southern California. When I met him he had become an important member of the staff of the largest psychiatric facility for vets in the country, at the Wadsworth VA Hospital in Brentwood, California, one zip code up from Santa Monica. Back then doctors didn't have a diagnosis for the symptoms Vietnam vets were presenting. It would be several more years before posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) would be recognized by the medical establishment as a complex of symptoms and a specific diagnosis—and only then thanks to the tireless and empathic work of Drs. Robert Lifton, Leonard Neff, Chaim Shatan, and Sarah Haley and Vietnam veterans themselves. But guys identified with Shad. He had established rap (discussion) groups in Venice, Santa Monica, Watts, and the barrio and helped put Bruce and Nancy in contact with many of them.

Ron Kovic invited me to come to a meeting of the Patients' Rights Committee at the Long Beach Veterans Hospital, where he was currently a patient. He wanted me to hear from other guys about the poor conditions there. It was midday when several hundred people, the majority on gurneys or in wheelchairs, gathered on the lawn behind the paraplegic ward. Ron and another ex-marine, Bill Unger, had had a leaflet distributed announcing that I would be there. In protest there was a counter-demonstration of World War II and Korean War vets, waving flags and singing patriotic songs to try to drown us out.

I don't remember what I said to the vets that day, but I do recall being totally shocked at what they said to me. The guys from the paraplegic ward told me how their urine bags weren't emptied and were always overflowing onto the floor; how patients were left lying in their own excrement and would develop festering bedsores; how call buttons weren't answered and when patients protested they'd be put in the psych ward, given Thorazine, or even lobotomized. Ron had been rolling his gurney around the different wards with a hidden tape recorder, gathering evidence, and journalist Richard Boyle verified these stories while researching an article for the *Los Angeles Free Press*. I immediately arranged for Nancy Dowd and Bruce Gilbert to come down and see for themselves, and everything we heard and saw found its way into the film *Coming Home*.

As it turned out, the final push to end the war coincided with the birth of Troy. It was 1973. Friends of ours, Jon Voight and his wife, Marche-

line, had just had a baby boy, James, and they recommended we take birthing classes with the woman who had coached them, Femmy DeLyser, who lived just south of us in Ocean Park.

My water broke one morning while I was standing on the porch with Carol. This time I was ready, and this time the birthing was different. For one thing, I was an empowered participant; Femmy had seen to that. No doctor was going to give me drugs unless I wanted them: no nurse was going to make me feel she knew more than I did about how it should go. I was awake, Femmy was there with me along with Tom and Carol, and though I begged for pain relief just before I was being wheeled into the delivery room, Troy was born before it took effect, so for all intents and purposes it was a natural birth.

Tom lifted the baby out of me, and I saw immediately in the overhead mirror that it was a boy. They laid Troy O'Donovan Garity on my chest, and I noted with groggy astonishment that he didn't cry. Tom was crying. I was crying. But not Troy. I'd never heard of a newborn not crying, and I saw this as a sign that his journey through life would be blessed.

During the first few weeks I was very resistant to letting Tom hold or change Troy. I think this was because I was defending my domain as the one who knew what she was doing. This was one area where I, who had already had a child, knew more than Tom—and I wasn't about to let this go. When I finally did let go, however, I was terribly moved by how tender Tom was with his son and how touched by fatherhood. He would lie naked in bed with Troy on his stomach for hours, just cooing to him. In his autobiography Tom wrote, "Then and there . . . I made a pledge: I would build my life around this little boy until he became a man." I don't believe anything in Tom's life softened his heart the way Troy did. Although Tom and I would divorce sixteen years later, he kept this pledge to his son and has always been a present and involved father.

Almost until the day I delivered, I had continued making speeches against the war on campuses all over California. With my protruding belly, usually draped in a bright purple knit poncho, I looked like the defiant prow of a ship. Within days after Troy's birth I returned to meetings and speeches, bringing him with me everywhere. I handled the experience so differently from the way I had with Vanessa. A lot of this change was because of Tom: He would not have tolerated leaving Troy, he was against nannies, and neither of us was about to stop what we were

Tom holding Troy.



*On our front porch with Troy.
(John Rose)*



doing—so by necessity I had a different relationship with my son than I had had with Vanessa. I was, perhaps for the first time, really showing up for someone.

Troy would nurse and our eyes would lock as he gazed at me across my breast for many minutes at a time. I realized that I was imprinting him with love and that my touch and this prolonged gaze between us were important. I know that for many mothers these things come naturally, but they hadn't for me—partly because of my own early childhood. As I have learned more about parenting over the years, I see that sometimes when you haven't healed your own wounds, as I hadn't, it is painful as a parent to open your heart to a child and you avoid it. My way of avoiding it was to stay busy. I was at the beginning of the process of healing when Troy was born, and the bittersweet part was my awareness and sadness that I was giving Troy something I had not given enough of to Vanessa. She was nearly five years old when Troy was born, and during the first years afterward, she moved back and forth between our home in Ocean Park and her dad's place in Paris.

The escalating scandal surrounding Watergate (many of Nixon's staffers had been forced to resign) was weakening the administration, which offered us a strategic opportunity to mobilize the antiwar forces IPC had built the previous year. When Troy was three months old, we embarked on a three-month tour. The goal was to put pressure on Congress to cut funding of the Thieu regime in South Vietnam. Troy would sleep in dresser drawers that I padded with blankets and set on the floor by our beds. When I'd make a speech, someone would hold him in the wings until I was through, and occasionally I'd be in the middle of a speech when my milk would let down, and I'd have to hand the microphone to Tom and step into the wings to nurse.

Following the tour, I made my second trip to North Vietnam, this time with Troy and Tom. The purpose was to make a documentary film, *Introduction to the Enemy*, aimed at showing a human side of Vietnam, a view of the people's lives and stories very few Americans would otherwise ever see or hear. We wanted it to be not about death and destruction but about rebirth and reconstruction. Haskell Wexler, the brilliant American cinematographer whose credits included *Medium Cool* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, filmed it for us.

It was very different this time. Not only had the bombing of the North stopped, but having Tom there to buffer and support allowed me to relax. It had been what I had learned about hope, on my first trip to Hanoi, that had motivated me to have another child. Now here was Troy, actually in Hanoi, a little bundle of manifested hope.

We went directly from North Vietnam, that spring of 1974, to six weeks of around-the-clock lobbying in Washington, D.C., to persuade Congress to stop funding the Thieu government. We found that the lobbying effort we had helped mount during the tour was generating thousands of letters and phone calls to congressional offices. One congressman was so inundated with mail that he pleaded, "Please call your people off. I'm voting with you, okay?"

In 1973 I had filed a lawsuit against the Nixon administration to compel the various government agencies to admit they had been carrying on a campaign of harassment and intimidation in an attempt to silence and impugn me. I wanted them to acknowledge that this was improper and to cease and desist. One afternoon that spring of 1974, I went with my friend and attorney, Leonard Weinglass, to take the deposition of former White House special counsel Charles Colson. Before, we met off the record with David Shapiro, Colson's law partner and chief legal adviser for Watergate matters. Tom was with us.

Shapiro told us it was Attorney General John Mitchell who ordered the Watergate break-in and also admitted that "my client [Colson] is not cleaner than driven snow. He heads the list of the biggest sons of bitches in town and they say everything points in his direction . . . but he has committed no crimes." His was merely "peanuts and popcorn politics," said Shapiro of Colson, who was in charge of compiling the White House enemies list and of destroying Nixon's opponents (who included not simply activists but antiwar Democrats, heads of major corporations, newspaper editors, labor leaders, and presidential candidates).

After thirty minutes Colson came in with a stenographer and the formal deposition began. I recall staring at an enormous cross that hung around Colson's neck and rested atop his potbelly. That's right, I thought, he has a cross to bear. It was an odd experience sitting in that posh office in the presence of this well-groomed, well-heeled, cross-bearing man who had been so involved in subverting American democ-

My lawsuit against the Nixon administration was settled in 1979. The FBI admitted that I had been under surveillance from 1970 to 1973; that they had used counterintelligence techniques, in violation of my constitutional rights, to "neutralize" me and "impair my personal and professional standing"; that they had seized without subpoena my bank records during that time and had made pretext calls and visits to my home and office to determine where I was.

In addition, the CIA admitted to opening my mail. I am told this was the first time the Agency had ever acknowledged conducting a mail-opening campaign in the United States against an American citizen. The suit also revealed that the State Department, IRS, Treasury Department, and White House all kept files on me. By then new guidelines and laws had been put in place by Congress and the new attorney general that prohibited all of these activities without judicial process.

In 2001 the Bush administration got Congress to pass the Patriot Act, which has rolled back the post-Watergate protections of our constitutional rights, expanding the government's authority to conduct wiretaps and allowing a noncitizen suspected of associating with terrorists to be detained without a warrant and without the right to consult an attorney. Even more Big Brotherish, the Patriot Act gives the FBI broad

*Final Report (October 1975) of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force in the Watergate cover-up case, *U.S. v. Mitchell et al.* This indictment was dismissed by the government on June 3, 1974, after Colson pled guilty in the case relating to the Nixon White House sponsored break-in at Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, *U.S. v. Ehrlichman et al.*, where Mr. Colson had been charged with conspiracy to violate civil rights. That indictment was also dismissed when Colson pled guilty to obstruction of justice in connection with the prosecution of Dan Ellsberg, a case that was dismissed by the federal judge because of government misconduct. Colson was sentenced on June 21, 1974, to serve one to three years in prison and fined \$5,000. (His actual sentence, however, only ran from July 8, 1974, until January 31, 1975.)

power to require libraries and bookstores to identify individuals who read or purchase books the government deems suspect; and the law provides that such individuals may not be notified that they and their reading habits are being investigated.

In the spring of 1974 Nixon's supplemental aid bill for Thieu was roundly defeated. In August impeachment proceedings began in Congress. That week Nixon became the first president in American history to resign from office. In addition to the Watergate crimes, the Senate Armed Services Committee had developed evidence suggesting Nixon had violated the law by permitting secret ground operations in Laos and Cambodia. But in the end it was for the narrower issues of illegal cover-ups in response to antiwar dissent, not because of the war itself, that Nixon was finally forced to resign. In the wake of the Watergate scandals, when asked what I thought of it all, I replied, "I'm still here. The last government's in jail."

Gerald Ford became president, pardoned Nixon one month later, and by attempting to reinstate funding for Thieu proved that the United States was still unwilling to give up its corrupt South Vietnamese ally and leave Indochina to the Indochinese. But in the spring of 1975, after more than ten years of war, the North Vietnamese and their supporters in the South entered Saigon. The war was over.

It was hard to believe. There was joy that it was over, but there was sadness, too, as we watched the scenes unfold on television: helicopters lifting out embassy personnel, Vietnamese allies of the United States clinging to the skids. It didn't need to end this way. All along the Vietnamese had offered olive branches, believing that we who had fought our own war of national independence would understand them. So many wasted, lost lives on both sides. So much land and forest destroyed for no reason.

I have not returned to Vietnam since the war ended thirty years ago, and not all that I have heard about the situation there makes me happy. In North Vietnam the "hard-liners" won out over more moderate leaders, and they were heavy-handed and disconnected from the people in the southern cities when they set about trying to bring order out of

chaos. Thousands of former Saigon administrators and military officials were put into reeducation camps with no rights of appeal. Economic reforms were rigidly instituted without sensitivity to what people wanted and needed in the South. The Hanoi government went about imposing a centralized economy and social order ill suited to local conditions, with almost the same sense of entitlement that had allowed the United States to try to reorganize South Vietnamese society according to *our* westernized concept: an urban consumer culture. Still, none of this justifies what the United States did—and none of it seems to be keeping Americans tourists from spending their holidays there or U.S. corporations from investing there.

The Vietnamese were expecting the United States to honor its agreement to provide reconstruction aid. Instead the economic embargo of the North was extended throughout the country, all Vietnamese assets in the United States were frozen, and the United States blocked Vietnam's entry into the United Nations. The country was in desperate need of aid. Without it terrible hardships were imposed on South Vietnam, where years of war had taken the hardest toll, where hundreds of thousands of refugees were crowded into cities. The North Vietnamese hard-liners had to deal alone and ineptly with severe problems. On top of this there was a massive exodus from Vietnam. Mostly the ethnic Chinese (Hoa) fled the country in makeshift boats; tens of thousands died at sea. U.S. officials claimed that the "boat people" were victims of massive political persecution, and the crisis became the new "See? I told you so" justification of the war.*

Whatever hardships were foisted on the Vietnamese people by the new Communist regime, the widespread publicity put out by the Pentagon that, should they take over, the Communists would murder hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people turned out to be propaganda to ma-

*But congressional delegations who went to Vietnam and visited refugee camps in Indonesia in the late 1970s disputed this, saying the exodus was more due to historic hardships and economic devastation exacerbated by the U.S. embargo. When antiwar activists were asked to sign public petitions about the boat people, aimed at the North Vietnamese, I refused. I felt it was the U.S. government that should have been petitioned to live up to its treaty obligations and help alleviate hardships we had brought about. Unfortunately, it would take another whole decade for the Clinton administration to normalize relations and lift the trade embargo.

nipulate American public opinion—like Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction" in 2003.

There have been plenty of people who accused me of romanticizing the Vietnamese. Well, yes. They were easy to romanticize during the war, as they battled the mighty U.S. military power. The David and Goliath legend hasn't survived the centuries for nothing. Do you know anyone who roots for Goliath (except maybe those who want something from him)? It's the Davids who touch our hearts.

A FINAL WORD

There are still many Americans who believe the United States could have won the war had we "gone all out." Because of this, I cannot conclude the Vietnam chapters of this book without addressing this question.

The U.S. military did everything that General William Westmoreland, commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, and his successor, Creighton Abrams, asked for: bombing Laos and Cambodia to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail, mining Haiphong harbor and imposing a naval blockade, dropping more bomb tonnage on Vietnam than we did on *all* of Europe during World War II, pummeling Hanoi and Haiphong with B-52 bombers, and waging an all-out air assault against the rest of North Vietnam.

We could win battles, and did. Our soldiers fought bravely and well. But we couldn't win the war, at least not by conventional means. Of course, we could have dropped a nuclear bomb on them, and Nixon was threatening to do so. In other words, if we couldn't defeat them, we could at least have annihilated them. But if the mighty United States had had to annihilate a country of rice farmers and fishermen in order to win, wouldn't that have cost us our national soul? I'm sure there are those men—Henry Kissinger and Dick Cheney most likely among them—who think that mentioning "soul" shows we're soft, unmanly. If you feel this way, then forget about soul and think more pragmatically about the issue of global capitalism—apparently not an invalid reason to send our boys to die. But from an investment point of view we never had to fight a war there at all: Since way back in the 1940s Ho Chi Minh had said he would turn Vietnam into a "fertile field for American capital and enterprise." He

even suggested he might offer the United States a naval base at Cam Ranh Bay if we helped his country stay independent from the French.

Today—fifty-eight thousand American lives and millions of Indochinese lives later—even with the “enemy” running the country, the United States has more than \$1 billion invested in Vietnam; trade between the two countries has reached \$6 billion a year; the United States is Vietnam’s largest export market. In the fall of 2003 Vietnam’s defense minister, Pham Van Tra, was received in our nation’s capital with full honor guard at the Pentagon. All the dominoes are still standing. Vietnam is considered one of the safest havens for tourism and business.

The real question isn’t how we prosecuted the war but whether the entire United States enterprise in Vietnam was wrong from the get-go. We sent our men to die there *not* to help the Vietnamese gain freedom, but to destroy an indigenous nationalist movement because it threatened U.S. influence and control over the country and because we needed to maintain our “credibility as an ally,” to quote the Pentagon Papers. This was a betrayal of what we stand for. In a battle that pits bamboo against B-52, the victory for bamboo symbolizes hope for the planet.

The U.S. loss represented our nation’s chance for redemption. But we did not learn the lesson, and then we tried to rewrite history to blame it all on the very people who tried to stop it.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I’M BAAAAACK!!

*The world changes according to the way people see it,
and if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way . . .
people look at reality, then you can change it.*

—JAMES BALDWIN

ONCE THE WAR WAS OVER, I returned to filmmaking and Tom began to investigate the pros and cons of running for the U.S. Senate. Although I did not see it at the time, in hindsight I realize that this marked the beginning of a less harmonious time in our marriage. For three years we had been joined together, at the heart and hip, in our effort to end the war. Now I was resuming a career that would have more impact on our lives than either of us anticipated—an impact that would both please and dismay Tom.

Because of the profound changes I’d experienced over the previous five years, I had a new sense of the possibility of personal transformation, and I wanted to use films as a catalyst for this process. Movies like my brother and Dennis Hopper’s *Easy Rider*, as well as *Five Easy Pieces* and *Midnight Cowboy*, show the revolutionary changes that were rocking American filmmaking in the 1960s and 1970s. I, however, subscribe to what British playwright David Hare says: “The best place to be radical is at the center.” I wanted to make films that were stylistically mainstream, films Middle America could relate to: about ordinary people going through personal transformation. Though it was inchoate at the time, I was also beginning to view transformation from a perspective of gender:

What is man? What is woman? What makes them do what they do the way they do it?

I saw the fledgling film that Bruce Gilbert, Nancy Dowd, and I had been developing as a way to help redefine masculinity.

Our story had a marine, my husband, with full use of his body (including his penis), who wanted above all to prove his manhood by being a "hero." But because he was neither sensitive nor spontaneous, he was not a good lover. The paraplegic I met in the VA hospital, on the other hand, did *not* have a functioning penis, and all he wanted was to be human. His willingness to reexamine long held beliefs, along with his physical incapacity, made him sensitive to another's needs. His pleasure came through giving pleasure—at least that was my intention, and thus the film could potentially illuminate a sexuality beyond genitalia.

We needed to take the project to the next stage, where we could pitch it to a studio, and veteran screenwriter Waldo Salt, writer of *Midnight Cowboy*, was the one we wanted. My agent told us he would be impossible to get: "Forget it, there is no way. There's no studio attached and it isn't a commercial project." Not to be discouraged, Bruce got Waldo's phone number in Connecticut and called him cold. To our surprise Waldo said, "Sounds interesting. Send me what you have."

Waldo agreed to come onto the project but wanted to start from scratch and bring in the team with whom he had done *Midnight Cowboy* and *The Day of the Locust*: British director John Schlesinger and producer Jerry Hellman. I had great respect for Schlesinger, who had come from the world of documentaries and whose films had an unusual, gritty realism that would be perfect for us. Jerry Hellman's experience, taste, and enthusiasm for the fragile project made me optimistic that we might actually get it made. Though it was not an easy pill for Bruce to swallow after the work he had put into it, he agreed to be associate producer. We both knew we needed all the experience and heft we could get (as well as a new script) if the film was to get made. Studios weren't exactly clamoring for stories about Vietnam vets in wheelchairs, and the few Vietnam-based stories that had been released hadn't done well.

In a grand gesture of commitment and generosity, Waldo and Jerry did something very rare: They agreed to work on spec until we had something that would convince a studio to give us development money. Jerry got us an office at MGM (where United Artists was then headquar-

tered). Bruce quit his job, and thus began the second phase of our project's development.

Waldo Salt was an old lefty, one of the Hollywood writers who had been blacklisted in the fifties. He had a heart of gold and a great talent for capturing the subtext of a scene. With Bruce and Jerry's help he threw himself into his research with the gusto one would expect from a man with his history, visiting VA hospitals, talking with vets. (It was Waldo who encouraged Ron Kovic to write his memoir, *Born on the Fourth of July*.) Jerry financed the research from his own pocket and came up with the film's title, *Coming Home*.

Waldo's script maintained the original triangular story, turning my husband into a marine officer and me into a traditional officer's wife, waiting for her husband to come home from Vietnam in the late sixties. He had me getting my own apartment and volunteering (against my husband's wishes) in the VA hospital, where I meet a man who has already come home from Vietnam and needs to heal—body and soul—from the physical and psychic wounds of the war.

On the strength of Waldo's lengthy treatment, the heads of United Artists agreed to finance the development of a full screenplay. We were off and running, but we would soon learn how much time goes into producing original material. I would have two other films under my belt—*Julia* and *Fun with Dick and Jane*—before *Coming Home* would be ready to shoot. Before that happened, only seven weeks before our intended start date, Waldo suffered a massive heart attack and was unable to continue working. Then John Schlesinger bowed out with these memorable words: "Jane, you don't need a British flag on this one." I loved him for his forthrightness but was beginning to wonder if, in the face of such setbacks, victory could be pulled from the jaws of defeat.

Meanwhile Tom's interest in running for office grew, stemming from the fact that in the wake of the Vietnam War and Watergate, new political forces had been unleashed, which he labeled "progressive populism." Jimmy Carter was running for president, Jerry Brown was the new governor of California, and a whole new class of congressmen and women like Bella Abzug, Tim Wirth, Andy Young, and Pat Schroeder were in office, making their strength felt.

Tom had spent six months traveling the state, meeting with people,

testing the waters, debating whether or not to run for the U.S. Senate. The meeting I remember most vividly during that time was with César Chávez, the internationally respected founder and leader of the United Farm Workers union. It was the first time I had met César, who like Martin Luther King Jr. was a devout follower of Gandhi's principles of nonviolent resistance, not just as a tactic but as a governing philosophy. I was mesmerized by his soft eyes and quiet wisdom. The meeting was especially moving because my father's film *The Grapes of Wrath* had so personalized for me the plight of migrant farmworkers, whether they were "Okie" refugees from the Dust Bowl or Mexicans.

When Tom asked César what he thought about the idea of his running for the U.S. Senate, César answered, "We've seen many candidates come and go. It would be a waste of time and money unless you build something lasting, like a machine. Not like Mayor Daley has, but a machine for people. *That* would interest us."

Meanwhile a woman came into my life who would become a pivotal friend. A year or two before the war ended I had received a call from film producer Hannah Weinstein in New York, asking if I would help her daughter, Paula, get a job in Hollywood. Back in 1971 Hannah had been the first person to give me a generous contribution for the GI office; I remembered well how warm and encouraging she had been to me at the time, and though I didn't know Paula, I wanted to return Hannah's favor.

Paula was a tall brunette with sexy brown eyes and a dry sense of humor. A recent graduate from Columbia University, where she had been involved in student antiwar protests, she now wanted to follow in her mother's footsteps and become a film producer. I was impressed with her guts and obvious intelligence. As soon as our lunch was over I walked across the street and asked my agent, Mike Medavoy, to hire Paula. He did—as a script reader. It didn't take long for the agency to recognize talent, and soon thereafter, when Mike left to become an executive at United Artists Pictures, Paula became my agent—and to this day she remains one of my most cherished friends. Our lives are intertwined personally and professionally. I am godmother to her daughter Hannah, she was one of the producers of the most recent movie I made, *Monster-in-Law* (fifteen years after my retirement), and we always have each other's backs.



Speaking at a rally with César Chávez, founder and leader of the United Farm Workers union.
(AP/Wide World Photos)

As my agent, Paula did something for me that no one had ever done: She fought a passionate and personal battle to win me the role of Lillian Hellman in *Julia*. Lillian, the author of such plays as *The Little Foxes* and *Toys in the Attic*, happened to also be Paula's godmother.

Julia takes place in the 1930s during the rise of Nazism in Europe and is the story of the relationship between Lillian and her childhood friend Julia. Julia goes off to Vienna and becomes involved in the anti-Fascist movement, trying to get help to Jews inside Nazi-occupied Austria and Poland. Though they have not seen each other for years, Julia seeks help from her friend Lillian, asking her to smuggle money (sewn into the lining of a fashionable fur hat) through customs into Poland, where she arranges to meet her. Their last, memorable, terribly moving scene together, which is both a reunion and farewell, takes place in a restaurant in Warsaw where Lillian surreptitiously passes the hat with the hidden money to Julia under the table. Years later Lillian learns that her friend has been murdered by Nazis.

The film provided me with a multidimensional, dramatic role in what has become a film classic and brought me my third Oscar nomination for Best Actress. It also gave me the chance to work with the great director Fred Zinnemann—who had made *From Here to Eternity*, *High Noon*, and *A Man for All Seasons*—and my professional idol Vanessa Redgrave. There is a quality about Vanessa that makes me feel as if she resides in a netherworld of mystery that eludes the rest of us mortals. Her voice seems to come from some deep place that knows all suffering and all secrets.

Watching her work is like seeing through layers of glass, each layer painted in mythic watercolor images, layer after layer, until it becomes dark—but even then you know you haven't come to the bottom of it.

Vanessa was perfect as Julia, who Lillian knows is braver, stronger, and more committed than she is herself, and I benefited from the memory that I held in my bones of my own brave childhood friend Sue Sally, whose lead I had always been ready to follow, just as Lillian tried to follow Julia's. When we worked together I recall never being sure where Vanessa was drawing her inspiration from, what choices she was working off of, and this invariably threw me slightly off balance—which worked in the film. The only other time I had experienced this with an actor was with Marlon Brando in *The Chase* (written, by the way, by Lillian Hellman). Like Vanessa, he always seemed to be in another reality, working off some secret, magnetic, inner rhythm that made me have to



As Lillian Hellman
in *Julia*.
(Eva Sereny/Camera
Press/Retna Ltd.)



With Vanessa Redgrave in a scene from *Julia*.

adjust to *him* rather than maintaining my own integrity in the scene. I suppose I didn't *have* to; but maybe that's just who I was back then.

Among the members of the cast of *Julia* was a newcomer playing the role of the bitchy black-haired Anne Marie. I remember the first time I saw rushes in which she appeared; it was the scene where Lillian comes into Sardi's restaurant following the smash opening of her Broadway play *The Little Foxes*. I am seen making my way through the crowd of well-wishers, and as I walk offscreen the camera lingers on Anne Marie's face: With a slight hand gesture to her mouth and an indefinable look in her eyes, the young actress revealed an entire character. I think my own hand must have come to my mouth at that moment, and as soon as rushes were over I ran to a phone to call Bruce in California. "Bruce," I said, quite out of breath, "listen carefully. There's this young actress with a really strange name, Meryl Streep. Yes, M-e-r-y-l, with a 'y.' I haven't seen an actress so amazing since Geraldine Page. I'm telling you, she's going to become a huge star. We have to try right away to get her for the other woman's part in *Coming Home*." As it turned out, Meryl was committed to a play and unavailable. But I feel lucky to have had that early glimpse of her unique talent.

Another wonderful thing about *Julia* was the chance to work again with Jason Robards. We had done a silly comedy back in the sixties, *Any Wednesday*. But in *Julia* he was perfect as Lillian's gruff, leave-no-prisoners partner, Dashiell Hammett, author of *The Thin Man*.

Tom brought Troy to Europe twice, for ten days each, during the three-and-a-half-month shoot. Years later he told me how hard these long separations were for him. I accepted the fact that he had to remain in California to take care of organizational matters. I didn't want to face the possibility that he was angry—or that *I* was angry that he and Troy didn't visit more.

Before leaving, I had hired a baby-sitter to help Tom out. She was a nice, attractive young woman; I thought she was sexy and told Tom so. One night in Paris during his visit, he told me he wanted to talk to me about something; it was about the baby-sitter, he said. He reminded me that I thought she was sexy, and from the way he then hesitated, I sensed what was coming and told him not to say any more. "I don't want to hear it," I said. I assumed he was going to tell me he had slept with her. I was going to have to be by myself for another month once he was gone, and I didn't want to be angry and do something I would regret. Since we

didn't even talk about far easier subjects, it should be no surprise that we never discussed the issue of monogamy or what I expected from him when I was away for so long. Because I hadn't worked a lot during our first years together, it took him by surprise when I began to be absent for work. I'd done *A Doll's House* in Norway and then another film in Leningrad, *Blue Bird*, directed by George Cukor, and now *Julia*. This was new for him. It was usually Tom who did the coming and going. Perhaps he was used to having a more "open relationship" with other women, but my experience with Vadim had taught me that it didn't work, at least not for me. I take full responsibility for cutting Tom off from what might have been an important conversation for the good of our relationship. But neither one of us ever broached the subject of infidelity again. I never did find out what, if anything, had happened between Tom and the baby-sitter.

Vanessa was now seven years old. I told Vadim I didn't think it was good for her to keep breaking up her school year between California and Paris. At least partially because of this, when he and Catherine Schneider divorced, Vadim moved to his old haunt on Malibu Beach and remained in California for a good part of the next five years, later moving into a house in Ocean Park a few minutes from us.

Three years had elapsed since we had begun work on *Coming Home*, but the script still wasn't quite ready when *Julia* wrapped. By now, at the instigation of Jerry Hellman and to our great good fortune, Hal Ashby had come on board as our director. Hal, an offbeat, aging hippie of a man, with glasses, long wispy gray hair, and a full beard, had directed some of my favorite films: *Harold and Maude*, *The Last Detail*, and *Shampoo*. He appeared to be very laid-back but in reality was wired and tough as a bull. When Waldo Salt had the heart attack, Hal brought in his longtime friend, editor and screenwriter Robert Jones, to complete the script. Working overtime and selflessly, Jones crafted a script from Waldo's first draft and many notes, but the script remained a work in progress during the entire shooting. Haskell Wexler, who had filmed *Introduction to the Enemy* with Tom and me in North Vietnam and *Bound for Glory* with Hal, was our cinematographer. Jon Voight had been offered the role of my husband, the rigid marine officer, but he worked tirelessly to convince us all that he was the man to play Luke, the paraplegic role inspired by Ron Kovic. Jon participated actively in much of the research with the vets, and finally his passion and commitment persuaded us to go with him.

Bruce Dern, my old pal from *They Shoot Horses* days, would end up being wonderful as my husband.

While Jones was working on the script, out of the blue I got a script from my friend Max Palevsky and his producing partner, Peter Bart, called *Fun with Dick and Jane*. It was serendipity—a social satire about an overconsuming, middle-class, keep-up-with-the-Joneses couple (Dick was played by George Segal) and how they deal with his sudden layoff from an executive position at an aerospace company. Despite all the trapings of the American dream (mainly for the neighbors' benefit), they own nothing and have saved nothing. All they have are mortgages and credit card debts. As soon as word of his firing gets out, all the creditors show up to repossess everything. Faced with the hard realities of people on food stamps and welfare, they turn to crime. I couldn't believe my luck—a quick shoot that didn't require me to leave home, in a comedy with something to say, in which I could show I was still funny and could still look good. The film would be released before *Julia* and be my "she's back" film, proving to the studio heads that I was still a bankable star.

Fun with Dick and Jane was an easy film from an acting point of view, which was fortunate because I spent every second I wasn't on camera raising money for Tom's Senate race. I organized an auction that brought together Steve Allen, Jayne Meadows, Groucho Marx, Lucille Ball, Red Buttons, Danny Kaye, and my dad in support of Tom. I got Linda Ronstadt, Jackson Browne, Arlo Guthrie, Bonnie Raitt, Maria Muldaur, the Doobie Brothers, Little Feat, Chicago, Boz Scaggs, Taj Mahal, James Taylor, and many others to do benefits; I got Dad to do paintings I could auction off (I bought them all myself). I was a whirlwind of activity on Tom's behalf, and when *Fun with Dick and Jane* was finished, I traveled the state, building support and putting hundreds of thousands of dollars into the campaign war chest. In the end he didn't win, but he got 36.8 percent of the vote—1.2 million Californians had cast their votes for a New Left radical, cofounder of SDS, and co-conspirator of Chicago. This was unprecedented in recent political history.

But we lost. I think I took it harder than Tom did. I felt it as *my* failure—not an unusual response, I have discovered, for women whose sense of self is tied to their husbands' public life. Does this surprise you? Me, with my financial independence and career? But there you have it. A woman can be powerful professionally, socially, and financially, but it is what goes on behind the closed doors of her most intimate relationship

Multitasking during a lunch break on *Fun* with Dick and Jane—fund-raising for Tom's U.S. Senate campaign.
(Michael Dobo/www.dobophoto.com)



Me and Troy in our campaign T-shirts.
(Star Black)



Campaigning with Tom.
(Anne Marie Slaas)



and within her own heart that tells the story. And like Vadim, Tom defined me to myself: If brilliant, articulate Tom was with me, then I couldn't be all bad.

Tom kept his promise to César Chávez and morphed his Senate campaign structure into a statewide grassroots organization called the Campaign for Economic Democracy (CED), which focused on economic issues. The average American family was earning less than a decade earlier; inflation, largely the result of the Vietnam War, was robbing them of their savings; and unemployment was rising sharply as more corporations automated or took jobs overseas to cheap labor markets. We also took on the nation's reliance on foreign oil and the use of nuclear energy (we pushed the use of alternative energy sources like solar and wind); we supported small farmers against agribusiness; and we fought for the rights of workers, including office workers. Many of CED's concerns found their way into the movies I would subsequently make.

As soon as *Dick and Jane* wrapped, we began shooting *Coming Home*, even though many of the key scenes still weren't locked in. In fact, we had no ending everyone was happy with, and Hal and I disagreed about the nature of the critical love scene between Luke and my character, Sally Hyde. There were always vets in wheelchairs all around us as we filmed, and a few had their girlfriends with them. Some were quadriplegic, which means the injury is high up on the spine and paralysis is from the neck down; some were paraplegic, which means the wound is lower on the spine and paralysis is from the waist down (for a man, the lower down the wound, the less the penis is affected). I remember one quadriplegic in particular, whose really cute girlfriend would sort of flip him over, fold him up, and sit on him playfully. There was a vibe about them that was utterly trusting and deeply sexual. Since I needed to find out as much as I could about what sex was like for a couple in their situation, I talked to them quite a bit. I learned that the girl had been brutalized by a previous boyfriend who had once thrown her from a moving train. This in itself was illuminating: It made sense that a victim of abuse would be attracted to a man who couldn't hurt her physically. When it came to sex they said they never knew when he would have an erection; it was not connected to anything she did or said. "It can happen any-

time—when we're driving past a gas station or looking at a daisy. But when it happens it can last for hours . . . one time for four hours," she said with a sexy, knowing look to him. I had to go off by myself and think about that for a while till my palms stopped sweating.

Anyway, until the dramatic "four hour" revelation, genital penetration was not something I had considered possible between my character and Jon's, and this to me was a powerful aspect of the story—a dramatic way to redefine manhood beyond the traditional, goal-oriented reliance on the phallus to a new shared intimacy and pleasure my character had never experienced with her husband. But Hal didn't see it that way. He too knew the "four-hour story," and penetration was definitely where he was headed with the scene.

There were a number of things Hal and I didn't agree on (like my character's husband's suicide at the end), but I tried to make my points as clearly as I could and then let go and leave it up to him. I had neither the confidence nor desire to fight with Hal, whom I respected enormously as a director. The one exception was the Battle of Penetration. Both of us knew that the scene had to be really hot—not as arbitrary sex but as the centerpiece of their relationship, emblematic of her transformation and—for me, anyway—of a masculinity sans erection. Jon agreed with me, by the way, and there were endless, very funny on-set discussions about it between us: "Where *can* he feel something?" I would ask Jon. And, "Are his nipples sensitive?" That sort of thing. As the time approached to film the pivotal scene, we all agreed that Hal should not be limited in what he shot, that it should include total nudity, at least the semblance of oral sex, and anything else he might need to create a groundbreaking love scene. I knew I could not do that myself. I may have been *thought* of as a wild sex symbol for a period of time, but it was more the art of suggestion than anything overt. So I suggested a body double be hired to do all the long shots. We decided Hal would shoot those first, so we'd know what shots we'd need to match when we came in for the close-ups. I stayed away while they spent all day filming with the double, and when I saw the footage the next day it was evident from the way the actress was moving on top of Jon that Hal had won the first round of the Penetration Battle.

"Hal," I said, "she can't be riding him that way; he can't get an erection. I thought we had agreed!" Hal, however, was not about to throw out the footage and concede to me. So I thought, Ah-ha, when the time

comes for me to match my close-ups to the body double's, I'll just make sure I don't move like that, and he won't be able to intercut the footage.

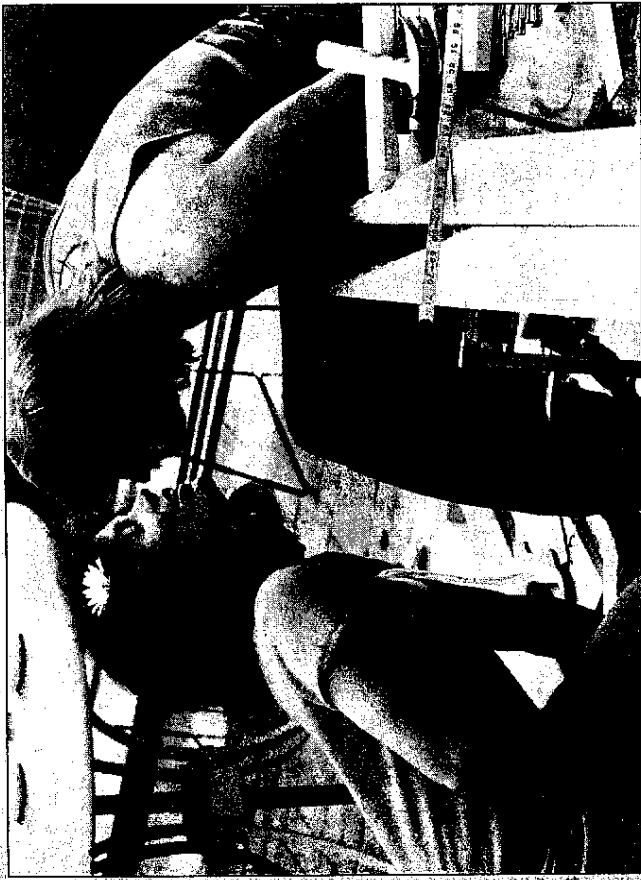
Finally the day came for shooting the love scene. Large sheets were hung around the area of the bed and the set was closed to everyone except the camera operator, Haskell, and Hal. Jon and I spent most of the day in bed, naked under the sheets, being filmed from various angles. It's a strange experience doing this kind of scene: There is a sexy, electric charge in the air, and everyone overcompensates by becoming very businesslike. You appear to be doing the most intimate things together, naked, skin against skin, pretending ecstasy, while signaling to your body, *Hush now, this is just a job*. Then the director says, "Cut," and you stop and move away in bed because you want to show that it was only acting—but not moving *too* far or *too* fast, so as not to hurt the other actor's feelings, all the while working on getting your breathing back to normal. I remember feeling grateful for Jon's trust and happy that we could giggle together between takes, that we both had a commitment to our friendship above and beyond the scene. He was as much Tom's friend as mine, after all.

Hal had saved the key shot for last, the one with me/Sally sitting on top of Jon/Luke with the camera framing me from my shoulders up. For me, Sally was experiencing oral sex, and I was moving and reacting accordingly when Jon suddenly whispered, "Jane, Hal's yelling at us!"

From far away behind the hanging sheets, I heard Hal's voice, "Ride him! Dammit! Ride him!" I froze, refused to move. I was not going to give up my concept of what was happening. The cameras kept rolling. Hal kept shouting, "Move your body, goddammit!" but I wouldn't. Finally he gave up and stormed off the set. I felt bad. I'd never seen Hal mad; he was usually so mellow.

Hal ended up using both shots, even though the long shot of the body double didn't match what I did in the close-up. In the end, I think audiences read into the scene whatever they wanted. God knows everyone had a strong reaction to it, though compared with today's love scenes it seems pretty tame. Of course, in my opinion what made it especially hot was the sexual tension that had built up between the characters in the preceding scenes. Just as in life, the buildup of desire *beforehand*, especially when it is withheld, is what makes the act itself explosive.

To be truthful, Jon and I didn't know up until we saw the final version of the film if it all really worked. Hal and Jerry showed a very rough



With Jon Voight in a scene
from *Coming Home*.
(Steve Schapiro)



Accepting my second
Academy Award
(*Best Actress in Coming
Home*) in sign language.
(© Motion Picture Academy
of Arts and Sciences/
Long Photography)

cut for an invited audience of about fifty people in a United Artists projection room. These events are always fraught with anxiety, which was compounded by the personal, emotional investment I had made in the film. When the lights came back on, Tom got up and walked right past me without saying a word. As he went out the door, he turned and said to Bruce, Jon, and me, "Nice try." The coldness of his response was devastating for all of us. It took me weeks to recover.

Tom was not used to seeing rough cuts, and it was true that the film was too long and had problems; but it also had powerful moments, even at that early stage. Yet Tom chose to dismiss all our work outright. I came to believe that the explicit love scene shook him more than I had anticipated, though he claims it was the film's "watered-down politics." This was the first time I had shot a love scene since Tom and I had married. I knew it was just pretend, and I hadn't anticipated that my husband would get upset. Maybe I was too used to Vadim, who was famous for *liking* to put his wives in explicit scenes. Maybe it was an eruption of the unexpressed anger we both felt toward each other.

In the end, there were many aspects that made the completed film work. One was Hal's style of directing: He had started off in the business as a film editor. Unlike other directors with whom I had worked, he would do thirty or forty takes of each scene, not saying very much to the actors about what they should do differently each time—and *he'd print all of them*. Then, in the solitude of the editing room, his brilliance would shine like that of a sculptor with clay. He would take a glance here, a sigh from me there, a slight turn of Jon's head, and would edit them together in a way we hadn't expected—or in some cases hadn't intended.

Then there was the way Haskell shot the movie, using long lenses and natural light, which gave the scenes a sense of beauty and voyeurism, as though the audience were looking through a keyhole at something intensely private and real. The improvisational nature of our acting added to this feeling of cinema *vérité*. Then there was the music, which was all Hal. He wallpapered the film with the essential music of the sixties, and all of us who had lived through it were transported back to the rage, the existential angst, the desperate idealism of that time.

There was also the heartfelt attention and care with which Jerry Hellman attended to every detail of the project. By the time the film was completed, all the senior executives at UA had left to form Orion Pictures and Jerry had the unenviable task of, in his words, "delivering it to a

skeptical group of new executives who had had little or no involvement in the project, and hence, no particular emotional commitment to it." But he kept the film safe from the vagaries of Hollywood. All of our tenacity paid off when, in April 1979—six years after its inception in my bedridden head—*Coming Home* received Academy Awards for Best Screenplay for Nancy, Waldo, and Robert; Best Actor for Jon; Best Actress for me, and nominations for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Film Editing, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Supporting Actress. Tom, Vanessa, and Troy were with me at the ceremony; I wore a dress that a supporter of Tom's designed for me, and I accepted my Oscar in sign language, to acknowledge GLAD, an advocacy organization for the deaf and hearing impaired that supported Tom. I had learned from them that the ceremony wasn't made accessible to the deaf in the United States. It was one of the happiest nights of my life. Besides, Ron Kovic told me later that the film had improved his sex life immeasurably.

In 1980 a Veterans Administration poll asked Vietnam veterans which feature films portrayed them most favorably. The highest ratings went to John Wayne's *Green Berets*—and *Coming Home*.

One day during the filming of *Coming Home* actor/producer Michael Douglas sent Bruce and me a script called *The China Syndrome*, about a near meltdown at a California nuclear power plant that company executives try to cover up. Everything about the script rang with authenticity, owing to the fact that it was written by Michael Gray, who had studied to become a nuclear engineer, was extremely knowledgeable about all that had gone wrong with nuclear technology in various plants over the years, and had consulted closely with three former nuclear engineers who'd resigned from General Electric over safety concerns. Gray had fashioned a taut, low-budget thriller about a nuclear engineer and a radical crew of documentary filmmakers. The only drawback was that there was no woman's role. Jack Lemmon, a passionately vocal opponent of nuclear energy, had agreed to star in the film, with Michael producing as well as starring. The third star, Richard Dreyfuss, had dropped out.

Bruce Gilbert and I had been developing a film about the nuclear industry inspired by what happened to Karen Silkwood, a worker in a Texas County, Oklahoma, nuclear power plant who was killed under

mysterious circumstances when she was on her way to deliver evidence of defective welds in the plant's core. We had considered having me play a television reporter who gets involved in a nuclear story. The research we had done showed us that local news was undergoing a disturbing change: In an effort to boost ratings, news consultants had recommended to station heads that they develop a new format where a racially balanced team of slickly attractive men and women would deliver "news lite," facing their stories with "happy talk."

We were developing our story for Columbia Pictures and, it turned out that Michael Douglas had brought *The China Syndrome* to the same studio. A studio executive, Roz Heller, suggested we combine our efforts, and that was when Michael came to us to see if the Dreyfuss role could be rewritten for me—with Bruce as executive producer this time.

We wanted Jim Bridges, best known at the time for *The Paper Chase* (and later for *Urban Cowboy*), to rework the script and direct. He excelled at character-driven stories, and he did not see our nuclear thriller as something that suited his particular talents. While Michael was working on the film *Coma* and I was in Colorado filming *Comes a Horseman*, Bruce kept coming back to Bridges in an effort to get him excited about the idea of creating a parallel story to the nuclear accident: the morphing of TV news into infotainment, with a female TV reporter who is trapped between pressure from her bureau chief (who wants to bury the nuclear story) and her growing commitment to getting it told. The reporter, Kimberly Wells, is ambitious and doesn't want to rock the boat, yet she resents being assigned fluff stuff and being told how to look. I told Jim the story of my early experiences in Hollywood, when Jack Warner wanted me to wear falsies and Josh Logan suggested I have my jaw broken and reset so that my cheeks would sink in. These were personal issues to me. Again, as with *Coming Home*, we were able to bring an added gender dimension to a story that hadn't started out that way. After turning us down four times, Jim finally saw his way into the story and its potential character dynamics—not just between Kimberly and her bureau chief, but between Kimberly and her more radical cameraman, played by Michael Douglas.

Jim and I talked by phone about the developing character of Kimberly. One day I announced to him that I wanted Kimberly to have flaming red hair. It was a way to tip my hat to a childhood heroine of mine, Brenda Starr, the gorgeous redheaded newspaper reporter in the comic

strip of the same name. Jim had liked what I did with the Bree Daniel character in *Klute* when she was alone in her apartment and asked me how I thought Kimberly would be when she came home from work. Did she have a pet? How was her place decorated? I told him that she hadn't even gotten around to unpacking from her move six months earlier from the San Francisco TV station to Los Angeles. Everything was still in boxes. In *Klute* I had decided Bree had a cat, and in one scene I licked the fork after I'd scraped some tuna fish into her bowl. Kimberly, I said, should have a giant turtle as a pet, something she'd had as a girl, and she talks to it every night when she carries it indoors with her to get it some lettuce (which Kimberly eats before handing it over to her turtle). In Bree's apartment there was a signed photo of President Kennedy that seemed out of context and made audiences wonder about its significance to Bree. In the same way I wanted Kimberly to have a reproduction of the famous Andy Warhol silkscreen painting of Marilyn Monroe. Like a lot of women, I felt Kimberly would have a special thing for Marilyn because of the tensions she symbolized between humanity and ambition, strength and malleability. No small number of people over the years have asked me about both the turtle and that image of Marilyn. It doesn't matter that they don't know *why* Kimberly has these things; it gives her specificity and interest as a person. Jim and I loved throwing in these sorts of odd, conspiratorial tidbits. There was nothing but creative chemistry between us as we worked long-distance to create my role.

The reason it was long-distance was that no sooner did I wrap *Coming Home* than I was off to Colorado to film *Comes a Horseman*, a story about a small Montana rancher just after World War II fighting to save her land from land barons and oil companies. James Caan was the co-star and Jason Robards played the land baron. But the big draws for me on this film were that Alan Pakula, who had directed me in *Klute*, was the director (with Gordon Willis once again the director of photography). It was also a great summer location where Tom, Troy, Vanessa, and I could be together; and I would be reunited with horses in a role that resembled a grown-up version of my childhood friend Sue Sally: a weathered, tough woman who ran her cattle ranch all by herself. It had been more than thirty years since I had been in a saddle, except for filming *Cat Ballou* in 1964, the only other western I'd ever done and it was of an entirely different nature.

Frankly, I was unsure whether I could really play the part of this

crusly woman, but Alan again gave me the courage to try. I knew that to do it properly I would have to become like the wranglers who rustle cattle and work the horses on western films. It wasn't the riding that would be the challenge; like sex and bicycles, that comes right back. But I needed to learn to throw a lasso, rope a calf, round up cattle, and brand and castrate male calves. Not that I had to do all of that in the film, but I needed the wranglers to know that, like my character Ella, *I could* do it all if asked, that I wasn't a city slicker. The wranglers' belief in me would give me belief in myself—as Ella.

I was working steadily, without a break, and my career was going full speed. I think about this when I hear admonitions from the powers that be warning outspoken actors to remember "what happened to Jane Fonda back in the seventies." This has me scratching my head: *And that would be?* The suggestion is that because of my actions against the war my career had been destroyed and that this will happen to them if they don't get with the program. But the truth is that my career, far from being destroyed after the war, flourished with a vigor it had not previously enjoyed.

It was during this period that Tom and I did one of the best things we did together: We bought two hundred acres north of Santa Barbara (two hours from our home) and created a performing arts summer camp for kids called Laurel Springs. Though I didn't recognize it at the time, what I learned at Laurel Springs laid the foundation for my third-act activism.

We wanted it to be a place where our friends could send their children—but we had an unusually diverse group of friends, ranging from people in the United Farm Workers union to city council and school board members to former Black Panthers to directors of community-based organizations to movie stars and heads of major studios. These were the varied backgrounds of the children who came to camp, and this diversity was what made it a unique and transformative summer experience that ran for fourteen years, from 1977 until 1991. Girls who had always had maids making their beds shared a cabin with girls who had never had a room of their own. Macho Latino gang member wannabes shared a bunkroom with a pale blond boy who suffered from muscular dystrophy



I learned to rope for my role in Comes a Horseman—here with James Caan.
(© Steve Schapiro)



At Laurel Springs Ranch with Tom, Troy, and our German shepherd, Gerorimo.
(© Steve Schapiro)

381

I'M BAAAAACK!!

and had to be carried everywhere. His courage in the face of his disability helped the other boys redefine the meaning of being a "real man."

I learned that even in a short period of time, a camp experience can transform a bully into a brother, a shy girl into someone unafraid to express herself, an urban kid who had been afraid of long grass into a real outdoorsman. I was surprised to see how exposure to nature could be terrifying for an urban youngster who had never seen a night sky filled with stars or felt mud oozing between his toes. Camp gave kids an opportunity to try on new identities. At home and in school, children often get tagged as being the "troublemaker," the "fast girl," the "macho boy," the "nerd." Camp allowed them to become a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, where they could start over and discover other parts of themselves. It always surprised me when parents would tell me, as they dropped off their children for the new camp season, how the effects of last year's two weeks had remained with their child all year long. As Michael Carrera of the Children's Aid Society has written, "Young people may forget what you say or what you do, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

This is the age when youngsters are going through intense changes and too often have no one to go to for help in working through the complicated maze of adolescence. The counselors at Laurel Springs heard a lot of "I have these feelings when I'm around her, like in my body, something happens. What is that?" This gave the counselors the opportunity to explain puberty, what menstruation signifies, or how the boy's body was changing and new feelings were coming up; that this was totally normal and beautiful; but that having the feelings doesn't mean he or she has to act on them. (The kinds of things my parents never discussed with me, nor I with my children—to my deep regret.) Campers came to our counselors to talk about their parents' addictions, about divorce, about death. I learned how important it is for children who've lacked physical affection to be held, to feel a warm, loving human touch *without* sexual overtones. Girls who have never had the loving arms of a father in which to safely rehearse tenderness will tend to go straight to sexuality in an attempt to get the craved contact. I learned how transformative it is for children to set goals and achieve them, be witnessed and acknowledged for it. I learned the extent to which deprivation can exist among children of the rich and the emotional richness that can exist among the very poor. I learned the importance of exposing children who have everything to children who have very little, and vice versa. I



The first group of campers at Laurel Springs. Vanessa is in the second row, directly behind the boy holding the camp sign, staring straight into the camera. Troy is way down in the front on the right. Tom is in the hat, back row, right.



Vanessa, age eleven.

learned, to my amazement, that approximately one-fourth of the girls at camp had been sexually abused.

Vanessa went to camp from age eight until fourteen and feels it was an important influence. She liked being physically challenged (with the older campers she climbed Mount Whitney) and spending time in the wilderness.

Troy says, "Camp was sort of my great social learning experience. I came to know children of farmworkers, children from all walks of life, through emotional, caring relationships. Regardless of what material possessions you had in the 'real' world, at camp people interacted with each other based on your character, not your possessions."

Troy grew up with the camp, starting out as its mascot when he was too young to attend officially and becoming an assistant counselor by the end. I watched him come into his own over the summers, developing crushes, learning the pleasures of slow dancing. One day when he was about fifteen, I came face-to-face with the realization that he possessed an unusual acting ability. I was watching him rehearse a play in which he played a gay tango dancer. His choices were so brave and free, so much more comedic and physical than mine (or his grandfather's, for that matter) had ever been. Right then and there I decided to do the opposite of what my father had done with my brother and me. I went up to Troy after the rehearsal and said, "Son, you have real talent. If you decide one day that this is a profession you want to go into, I will totally support you in that decision." Some years later, that is exactly what happened.

There was a beautiful eleven-year-old black girl from Oakland named Lulu. Everyone loved her. She had a laugh like a cascade of wind chimes. Her parents had been members of the Black Panther party, and her uncle worked with Tom. Lulu came for two years running, and then for several years we saw no more of her. When she returned at age fourteen, she had changed. She slept all day, couldn't tolerate being in a crowd, rarely spoke, and had terrible nightmares every night. At the end of the camp session, she confided to a counselor that she had been brutally molested by a man over a prolonged period of time. She had told no one because the man threatened to kill her and her family if she did.

Lulu was suffering from severe posttraumatic stress disorder, sleeping most of the time (as PTSD sufferers are prone to do), and getting D's and F's in school despite her innate intelligence. She had come back to camp because she needed to tell someone. I made a deal with her that if

she brought her grades up to B's by the end of the school year, I would get her into a school in Santa Monica and she could stay with us.

Lulu was fourteen when she came into our home and had been with us for about a month when one morning she came up to me as I was washing breakfast dishes and said, "I need to say something, but I'm a little ashamed."

"It's okay, Lulu, go ahead."

"I never knew till being here that all mothers don't beat their children."

I realized that simply allowing this young woman to be in a home where children disagreed with their parents and weren't beaten for it, where people sat at the table and talked together, was opening up a new world to her. Frankly I often wonder which of us has learned more from the other, Lulu or me.

I asked her once why the camp was an important experience for her. She hesitated for a moment before answering. "It's the first time I've been with people who think about the future."

That stopped me short, and coming to terms with what it implied has framed the way I see my work today with children and families in Georgia. There's a saying: "The rich plan for generations; the poor plan for Saturday nights." Middle-class folks take for granted that we have a future that requires planning for. To never think about the future means you live without hope.

One day while we were driving back from Laurel Springs, Lulu announced to me that she wanted to have a child.

"Why?" I asked, taken aback.

"I want something that belongs to me," she answered simply and honestly.

"Get a dog!" was my reply. Then I went on to talk with her about what would happen to her life if she had a child to care for before she was an adult woman. Having a child has few consequences if you don't see a future for yourself. When I once heard Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, say, "Hope is the best contraception," I knew because of Lulu how true these words were in relation not just to early pregnancy, but to drugs, violence, and a host of other behaviors that are indicators of hopelessness.

Lulu did not have a child. She went on to graduate from college, got herself into graduate school in public health at Boston University (with

no help from me), and has developed into a remarkable success story. Filled with intellectual curiosity and commitment to justice, she remains a member of my family. Early in her life Lulu had received just enough love from her mother to instill resilience in her, which is what enabled her to survive—spirit intact—later difficulties, of which her sexual molestation was but one example. Lulu also attributes her resilience to the Black Panther party in Oakland.

"I grew up with the Panther programs—their hot breakfasts and the things they did for kids. They were like my family."

Sometimes I feel as though I have a magnet on my skin and when I walk through the world the relevant input I need for my journey jumps out from the hurly-burly and sticks to me. That's the way it was at Laurel Springs. I needed the lessons the camp taught over those fourteen years.

My children had their own learning experiences. Both Vanessa and Troy grew up feeling different from others their age. Vanessa lived in two countries, spoke two languages, experienced two styles of parenting. "I liked having two lives—being different," she says. "I still do."

Troy's sense of difference didn't start until he entered a public junior high school and students would ask him why he wasn't driven to school in a limousine since his mother was a movie star. "This made me uncomfortable because it made me feel I was being looked at as a material object. I had never before had any awareness of material things or of the paradoxes of my life—living simply the way we did, yet you being famous. I began to feel like a misfit. But the best thing about being a misfit is that it attracts you to other misfits. And they're usually the most interesting people."

One area in which Troy realized there were differences with his friends had to do with the nature of his extended family. "Whereas my friends had aunts, older sisters, grandmothers, to assist in raising them," he told me recently, "I had au pairs, nannies, political organizers, and your assistants. You were my 'core mother,' and then you had tentacles. Dad would be one. Laurel Springs was another."

For Vanessa and Troy, camp provided a safe setting for many firsts: first kiss, slow dancing, wilderness. For Lulu, it provided a future.

Troy, age six.



Lulu, age thirteen.



Singing hymns with Tom and Mignon McCarthy at our annual Easter bash
at the beach. I miss chronic the Easter bunny. I miss that